

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC035971
Inspector	Chris Scully
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Registered person	St Helens Metropolitan Borough Council
Registered person address	Children & Young Peoples Services Atlas House, 2 Corporation Street ST. HELENS Merseyside WA9 1LD
Responsible individual	Jennifer Louise Turnross
Registered manager	Paul James Spencer
Date of last inspection	27/03/2014

Inspection date	12/06/2014
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Previous inspection	good progress
Enforcement action since last inspection	There has been no enforcement action since the last inspection.

This inspection	
Overall effectiveness	good
Outcomes for children and young people	outstanding
Quality of care	outstanding
Keeping children and young people safe	good
Leadership and management	good

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	good
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Young people thrive because they live in an exceptionally supportive, caring and nurturing environment which enables them to make excellent progress. Young people enjoy extremely positive relationships with staff and their peers. The home makes a positive difference to young people's lives and provides them with the tools and opportunities to achieve very positive outcomes. This is echoed by parents and social workers who say young people are cared for by a 'fabulous,' highly committed and dedicated' group of staff.

The 'voice' of the young people is at the heart of everything the home does. Staff are skilled at using various communication methods to ensure young people are consulted and listened to on all aspects of their care and activities. This means young people thoroughly enjoy their time here.

Staff have a sound understanding of each young person's specific and complex needs. Care planning is generally meticulous and highly personalised. Staff have high, realistic, aspirations for young people and work effectively to promote their growth, social and emotional development. Consequently, young people feel safe and are much more able to handle difficult and challenging situations. Parents say their children feel safe here and they know they are safe.

The home is well managed. The Statement of Purpose and young people's guide provide clear insight into the type of care and support each young person can expect to receive. Monitoring of the home by the Registered Manager is secure however reports by the independent person on occasion lack sufficient evaluation. Also reports by the Registered Manager and the independent person have not been sent to Ofsted in the prescribed timescales. Records and documentation are generally well maintained though there are some minor shortfalls with regards to some risk assessments, health care plans and personal profiles.

Full report

Information about this children's home

The home provides short-term breaks and some respite care for children and young people with physical and learning disabilities who are aged from 7 years to 17 years.

The home is owned and run by the local authority.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
27/03/2014	Interim	good progress
12/09/2013	Full	good
27/02/2013	Interim	good progress
04/12/2012	Full	adequate

What does the children's home need to do to improve further?

Statutory Requirements

This section sets out the actions which must be taken so that the registered person/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Reg.	Requirement	Due date
33 (2001)	ensure the registered provider supplies a copy of the monitoring report to Ofsted in particular these are received by the end of the month following the monitoring visit (Regulation 33 (5) (a))	29/07/2014
34 (2001)	ensure there are systems in place for monitoring the matters set out in schedule 6 at least once in every 3 months and a copy of the report is provided to the HMCI (Regulation 34 (1) (a) (2))	29/07/2014

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the service should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- enhance further the systems for monitoring the adequacy and frequency of record keeping with particular regards for young people risk assessments and personal profiles to remove conflicting information (NMS 22.1)
- enhance further the care and support provided to young people to minimise risk that they will go missing in particular ensuring that missing from care risk assessments are sufficiently detailed (NMs 5.1)
- ensure young people's health is promoted in accordance with their placement plan in particular health care plans are sufficiently detailed with regards to specific medical conditions (NMS 6.5)

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **outstanding**

Young people make excellent progress as a result of their short breaks at the home. They really look forward to coming and enjoy their stay. Parents comment that they cannot let young people see their bag before they leave home as they become too excited as they know where they are going. Young people say 'I love going there. I have so much fun. All the staff spoil me, especially my key worker'. They feel emotionally secure, confident and settled in their time away from their family. Parents say they trust staff implicitly, if they did not they could not rest while their child was here. They know their children are happy and say they really enjoy spending time with their friends.

Young people enjoy excellent, positive relationships with staff which are built upon trust. Social workers say young people are making excellent progress, they are much more self-reliant, and are gaining in independence skills. As a result, they are growing in confidence and self-esteem and are more able to engage with staff and the opportunities around them. Parents say young people enjoy an extensive range of activities, some of which they are not able to participate in when at home. Young people's social interactions have significantly increased due to the opportunities afforded to them in the home.

Overall they have greater access to a wider range of opportunities to explore the world they live in, build confidence in the community, and enjoy life to their full potential. Young people take opportunities to become more independent that are appropriate to their age, level of understanding and disability. They enjoy a wealth of self-chosen activities during their stay such as youth clubs, parks, beaches, cinema, bowling, community events and theatre trips. Young people say 'I love it here, I have wonderful staff who take me out and I have lots of fun!'

Young people are developing a very good awareness of healthy lifestyles. They are enabled to make informed choices about what they wish to eat. This is because of the highly effective communication systems which includes the use of pictures to enable young people to make informed choices. Parents and social worker's comment upon how the home works tirelessly to ensure young people's dietary needs are consistently met well. For example, purchasing specific branded items, checking product for nuts and making sure young people stay fully hydrated. A parent said, sometimes when staff take young people out on daytrips they go to their favourite fast food outlet and 'this lights up X's face as they seldom have one.'

Young people's attendance at school is excellent. They are collected each morning by their transport providers and taken to school. This effective and smooth transition is achieved because of the clear routines in place, which enable young people to prepare for the school day. For example, allowing young people to have a snack on

the bus as a treat. This effectively reduces young people's anxieties and means they are able to get to school on time and is a 'happy place.'

Young people are taking more responsibility for some of their personal care needs. They are increasing in confidence for example in the extent young people are able to help dress themselves and to take responsibility for collecting the personal care items. Staff respect young people's dignity and are sensitive to their need for privacy when delivering personal care. Transitions are managed extremely well. This means young people and parents are able to visit their new short breaks service and the move is planned to minimise any stress to the young person.

Contact with families is managed extremely well. The home has purchased tablet computers for young people so that they can talk to family members who live outside of the country. Parents can call the home at any time to talk to staff or their child. Parents say the communication between them and the home is 'excellent,' and the 'home -home book keeps us well informed of my child's activities during their stay'.

Quality of care

outstanding

Independent visitors say 'it is obvious from the children's faces that they have a fantastic relationship with staff'. Staff have high aspirations for all young people regardless of the complexity of their needs and disability, and the challenges they may present. The Registered Manager and staff effectively challenge barriers to disabled young people's participation in education, activities in the community, and rights to express their views and make choices about their lives. Parents say the home provides young people with 'every opportunity to fill their potential, to enjoy and integrate within their environment and community as desired'.

Young people's choices are intrinsic to the organisation of the home. Extremely high levels of appropriate consultation means young people are able to make choices about all aspects of their care, stay and the activities offered. For example, two young people asked would it be possible to have their stays together as they were best friends. They explained this would mean their stay would be more of a 'sleep over' and would allow them to play football together. They also put forward a sound case for having another set of goal posts as one was not sufficient. Consequently, their request was met and they now enjoy spending more time together and challenging each other and staff to games of football.

Staff are extremely knowledgeable about individual children's levels of understanding and comprehension associated with disability. As a result, staff engage appropriately to provide the support and reassurance children need to reduce their anxieties. They understand how best to communicate with individual children in ways that children easily understand.

Reviews are warmly received by parents who say this provides them with additional

opportunities to work in partnership with the staff and other agencies to support their child. Parents said they always attend the review and means the 'fantastic work' they (staff) do is a continuation of the school's and my hard work' to help my child reach their individual goals.

Care plans are generally meticulous and allow the uniqueness of each young people to shine. Care plans take into account the diverse and complex needs of each young person. However, on a small number of occasions young people's health care plans are not as robust as some information is not effectively recorded. However the effect of this is minimised because of staff's understanding of each young person's diverse needs. This is exceptionally well supported by the staff's commitment to working in partnership with parents, health care professionals, and others to create plans that are tailored to each young person's needs.

Children and young people enjoy healthy lifestyles and continue to have excellent access to a full range of health services and receive excellent support with any health problems. Staff closely monitor young people, and ensure they always get suitable medical advice and treatment when they are feeling unwell or showing signs of distress. The arrangements for dealing with medication are safe and effective.

Young people live in a warm welcoming homely environment. The home has recently undergone a phase of refurbishment which means all areas used by young people are decorated and unfurnished to a high standard. All areas of the home are fully accessible to all young people. Each bedroom is effectively designed to incorporate the specific needs of the young people. This means they can enjoy maximum independence in comfort and safety. Young people are able to personalise their rooms during their stay which enables them to feel happy, safe and at home. Young people say 'my bedroom is brand new and is gorgeous.'

Keeping children and young people safe good

Staff consistently ensure the welfare of young people is paramount. They effectively enable them to overcome any difficulties they may face so they are able to lead happy, fulfilling lives. They live in a safe environment where they are effectively protected from harm and have a strong sense of safety and well-being.

Young people are protected because of staff's secure understanding of the home's safeguarding and child protection procedures. This means they are clear on the action to take should they have any concerns. Positive relationships with social workers mean staff are fully aware of any issues which may impact upon young people's safety or well-being. Therefore, they are able to take appropriate action to support each young person.

Young people are effectively supervised at all times which significantly reduces the risk of them being missing. Appropriate procedures are in place should a young

person be missing, which are clearly understood by staff. This is supported by staff's understanding of each young person's behaviours and triggers. However, this knowledge is not always reflected within the young people's risk assessments, including those should a young person be missing. This is a recording issue and does not impact upon the care provided to young people.

Positive behaviour is consistently and effectively promoted. Staff work effectively and sensitively with young people, parents and schools to manage young people's behaviour constructively and reduce their levels of anxiety. This may be as simple as explaining to them what is happening and what they are going to do next, or providing them with regular experiences in the community to help them to feel confident in different surroundings. Sanctions are not used due to the needs of young people. Staff are highly skilled in de-escalation techniques which means the need to use a physical intervention to support a young person is extremely rare.

Young people are safe because staff carry out regular health and safety checks of the premises and obtain certifications for gas, electrical and fire safety checks. Young people are protected by a range of health and safety procedures and risk assessments that are consistently implemented in practice. Staff continually assess the environment to ensure young people are safe and make amendments to this as necessary; for example, adding alarms to the main exit doors and considering further improvements to the external gates for additional security.

The recruitment and selection of people working at the home is very thorough to make sure children are protected. The manager carefully ensures that staff have the skills and competencies to meet the needs of individual children. Also there are suitable systems in place to ensure that visitors and contractors are suitably checked and supervised to protect children.

Leadership and management

good

The Registered Manager has been in post since 2012. He brings to the role 16 years previous experience as a Registered Manager. He is suitably qualified to undertake his responsibilities, with a Level Five qualification in management. The Registered Manager and staff consistently demonstrate a strong commitment to delivering exceptional care practice tailored to the personal needs of the children and young people they look after. The effectiveness of this approach is evident in the excellent progress young people are making.

The Statement of Purpose is shared with young people's families and placing authorities. The Statement of Purpose is well written and provides a clear picture of the home's aims and objectives. This means placing authorities and young people's families are well aware of the care and support young people can expect to receive.

The home demonstrates a strong capacity for continued improvement based upon its

performance and development of positive outcomes for young people. For example, the home has improved upon the health and safety of young people by ensuring all loose fitting carpet tiles have been secured to prevent a tripping hazard. The Registered Manager has a realistic understanding of the strengths of the service and the areas for further development.

The home is monitored by an independent person on behalf of the authority. These reports cover all the required areas but lack any real evaluation and recently have not been sent into Ofsted within the prescribed timeframes. However the Registered Manager is generally aware of any issues from the visits and takes swift action to address these. Reporting by the Registered Manager has improved since the last inspection. However Ofsted has not received a copy of their report for some considerable time. This was raised at the last inspection and has not yet been addressed.

The homes' written records are held securely. They generally provide a comprehensive picture of the young people's experiences, needs, development and progress. On a small number of occasions the information held is not always clear, for example, some risk assessments are not as robust, and the use of the word absconding is not appropriate. Also on some occasions there is conflicting information in records regarding when some records have been updated.

Young people are looked after by skilled and compassionate people. They provide young people with a high level of consistent good quality care. They are caring and work well together to promote young people's welfare. Parents say staff are 'all fantastic, they are so dedicated and caring and want to give my child a fabulous experience while in their care. They are a gorgeous team of amazing people who care for my most precious possession.' The skills within the staff team match young people's needs well. The numbers of staff on duty are sufficient to meet the needs of young people in the best possible way. Most staff hold recognised qualifications with the remainder working towards their qualification.

What inspection judgements mean

Judgement	Description
Outstanding	A service of exceptional quality that significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Good	A service of high quality that exceeds minimum requirements.
Adequate	A service that only meets minimum requirements.
Inadequate	A service that does not meet minimum requirements.

Information about this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service and to consider how well it complies with the relevant regulations and meets the national minimum standards.

The report details the main strengths, any areas for improvement, including any breaches of regulation, and any failure to meet national minimum standards. The judgements included in the report are made against the framework of inspection for children's homes.