

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	08/11/2016
Unique reference number	SC036917
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered provider	Royal Borough of Greenwich
Registered provider address	Children's Services, The Woolwich Centre, 35 Wellington Street, London SE18 6HQ
Registered Individual	Andrew O'Sullivan
Registered manager	Deborah Forde
Inspector	Juanita Mayers

Inspection date	08/11/2016
Previous inspection judgement	Sustained effectiveness
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Outstanding
The children's home provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the home contribute to significantly improved outcomes for children and young people who need help, protection and care.	
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Outstanding
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Outstanding

SC036917

Summary of findings

The children's home's provision is outstanding because:

- The manager and staff make a significant difference to young people's lives. They deliver specific and measurable programmes that support young people to take positive and confident steps to live safer, happier and more independent lives. A young person said, 'No matter what we do, we know we always come first with the staff.'
- Young people benefit from a strong, committed and stable staff team which provides consistent care, boundaries and routines.
- Staff are highly nurturing. They work together as a team, communicating extensively and using every opportunity to reflect on issues and incidents.
- Young people's safety is given the highest priority. Effective strategies and actions are in place to keep them safe from harm.
- Professionals say that the staff have in-depth knowledge and understanding of the needs of young people. They promote, develop and sustain highly effective multi-professional relationships.
- An inspirational and skilled manager ensures that staff maintain an open culture that facilitates professional reflection and dialogue. This enables all staff to evaluate, challenge and remove any barriers to successful planning and effect real change in young people's lives.

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

Recommendations

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

- Staff should continually assess and update the risks for each child and the arrangements in place to protect them. In particular, ensure that risk assessments evidence the strategies in place to keep young people safe. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 42, paragraph 9.5)

Full report

Information about this children's home

This local authority home provides care and accommodation for up to five young people with emotional and/or behavioural problems. The home undertakes outreach work with young people, either to prevent the need for accommodation, or to provide ongoing support to them and their carers.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
29/02/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
29/09/2015	Full	Outstanding
12/02/2015	Interim	Improved effectiveness
04/06/2014	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Outstanding
Young people live in a home where staff build positive and trusting relationships with them and with important adults in their lives. Staff work consistently and energetically to overcome barriers to forming trusted and secure relationships. They are highly skilled at providing nurturing care. Staff demonstrate high levels of confidence in understanding and responding to the individual needs and vulnerabilities of each young person. Young people have strong, secure attachments with the staff team and understand the routines within the home. Young people identify that the warmth and love provided by the staff is key to their happiness and welfare. One young person said, 'No matter what happens or what I do, I know that I come first with staff.' Another young person commented, 'I trust them 100% because I know they love me and there is nothing, no matter how difficult or personal, that I would not talk about with them, even if we disagree.' Young people make significant progress in all aspects of their social, emotional and educational development. They develop appropriate life skills to prepare them for independent living. Staff show exceptional skills in quickly settling young people into the home. Staff are also very skilled at supporting young people to prepare to make the transition to the next stage of their lives. They work in partnership with social workers, health professionals and young people to ensure that transitions are well planned. Staff provide an essential outreach service for young people when they move on. Two young people spoken to said, 'It is quite scary thinking about leaving my home, but the staff are brilliant in supporting me to invest in my independence plan. I feel ready to move on, knowing that the staff will continue to support me for as long as I need it.' Staff value young people's education and have high expectations for them to attend and achieve. They quickly identify any barriers to learning for young people. Staff collaborate with educational professionals to ensure that the right level of support and learning is provided for each young person. Strategies are developed to help support young people to attend and engage in education that is appropriate for their specific needs. Consequently, young people successfully engage and make significant progress in education. In 2016, all young people achieved excellent results in GCSE exams, subject to their capabilities. A young person who achieved nine GCSEs said, 'The staff were brilliant. They helped me to focus and prepare, and gave me the confidence to know that with hard work I would do well, and I did.' Young people live in a warm and welcoming home. The manager uses innovative and creative methods to ensure that young people fully participate in the decision-	

making for any changes to the home. A young person commented, 'There is nothing that I have not had a say in.' Successful innovations have included monthly questionnaires for young people and the creation of a leavers group, consisting of previous residents who play an active role in the home. Most recently, they have been involved in helping the manager to rewrite the young people's guide and have offered a mentoring role with education and the development of independence skills. Young people recently enjoyed being involved in the complete refurbishment of all the bathrooms.

Young people's bedrooms reflect their individual personalities and afford them an amount of privacy away from others; they have keys to their bedrooms. Young people love living in this warm, family environment. They have gained a secure, stable base in which to thrive and achieve. When asked what they would change, a young person said, 'Why would I want to change anything about my lovely home?' Another young person commented, 'The staff do everything they can to make sure we are happy.'

Young people maintain good health, and any specific individual needs are followed up assiduously. Staff are robust in advocating on behalf of young people, ensuring that they receive all of the specialist services to which they are entitled, for example, assessments and support from child and adolescent mental health services. A community nurse said, 'The team is very proactive in supporting young people's social and emotional health. It will always contact for help and advice if they have any doubts. We maintain a mutually receptive relationship in our holistic care of young people.' Young people showed good awareness of sexual health, healthy eating and the importance of exercise. Staff weave positive understanding of these issues throughout all aspects of their care and support.

Young people enjoy and take part in a wide range of educational and fun activities. Positive opportunities and experiences help build on their existing talents and interests. This includes horse-riding, camping and the youth council. Some young people have pursued and are enjoying the confidence and independence gained from having part-time jobs.

Staff have an excellent understanding of the young people in their care. They understand how their experiences have influenced their complex behaviours. They are highly skilled at engaging young people and helping them to develop in confidence and self-esteem, which enables them to explore and understand their past. Staff emphasise the importance of honest reflection to ensure continual progress across all aspects of their lives. This positivity means that staff place young people's futures at the centre of their practice and ensures that young people have excellent reinforcements for the individual steps they take to make significant changes at each stage of their life.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Outstanding
Young people feel exceptionally safe and protected from all types of harm at the home. The staff team has excellent knowledge and insight into the challenges that the young people face. They understand how experiences of neglect and trauma affect their emotional well-being, and manifest in them taking unnecessary risks. In response, staff utilise clear strategies to help young people to manage the stresses of daily life. A young person said, 'Keeping ourselves safe is woven into every conversation we have with staff. They do everything in their power to keep us safe. I feel comfortable confiding in them on anything and know they will never judge me.' Risks associated with missing from home, child sexual exploitation and self-harming behaviour are very low because staff quickly identify signs and symptoms of risky behaviour and take effective action before escalation. On the rare occasions when young people push boundaries by absenting themselves from the home, staff implement individualised protocols, ensuring that young people experience a coordinated approach to keep them safe. Young people respond positively to the genuine concerns from staff for their safety. Engagement in direct work ensures that they are aware of the dangers associated with child sexual exploitation. Staff work closely with health professionals, including the children's nurse, to provide a coordinated approach for young people on staying healthy in all areas of their lives. This provides young people with a clear message that their safety and well-being are paramount. Individual risk assessments and positive behaviour support strategies are well understood and implemented by staff. Young people say that they are involved in revision of these and understand the actions staff will take should they put themselves at risk. However, written evidence of this meticulous approach is not always available. Staff and managers consistently review and discuss safeguarding concerns, in particular the constantly changing profile of internet risks and the need to respond with updated strategies. They have approached this thoroughly with young people to ensure that the young people develop a greater awareness of staying safe. Staff use praise liberally to motivate and value young people. Staff structure interventions carefully, using a positive social learning theory approach. As a result, there are few incidents of physical intervention. However, staff do not shy away from giving more difficult messages, to enhance self-awareness and improve young people's behaviour and safety. Young people value this robust and realistic approach, knowing that they will be protected from bullying or inappropriate relationships, but equally they know that they will be challenged fairly if they present unacceptable views or behaviours. A young person said, 'The staff will	

challenge me when my behaviour towards others is unacceptable. They help me to understand the consequences of my actions on others and myself. Now I understand how my actions can hurt others, own up to when I have done wrong and apologise for my behaviour.’ This approach suits young people, who feel valued and nurtured, and maintains a secure atmosphere in the home.

Young people value the contribution of staff and see this as constructive, improving their lives and supporting them as individuals. This makes them proud of all their achievements, and motivates them to want to see change in all aspects of their lives.

Robust recruitment procedures ensure that staff are carefully selected and the involvement of the leavers’ group on selection panels enhances this. The manager’s robust maintenance of staff files ensures that they contain up-to-date records of all required checks.

Staff and young people are proud of their home. It is a warm, welcoming family environment, reflecting young people’s involvement in activities and individual achievements. Young people regularly invite friends and family to participate in activities and meals in their home. Culture and diversity are celebrated and the home exudes an air of tolerance and acceptance.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Outstanding
This service is managed by an inspirational, visible manager who provides strong and decisive leadership. This enables the staff team to grow and develop and to offer exceptionally high quality care to complex and vulnerable young people. The manager is highly ambitious for young people. She has developed a culture where they are at the centre of the home’s practice. The team balances the needs and risks of young people with their potential, and their right to experience positive regard. As a result, young people make exceptional progress and achieve significant outcomes in all aspects of their development. The manager is highly experienced and suitably qualified. She has managed the home for 12 years and has developed and maintained a skilled, confident and dedicated staff team. Senior staff have highly developed skills, offer stability and share the same aspirations and high ambitions for young people. Young people, the staff team and professionals hold the manager in high regard. Young people openly spoke of the love and the high regard they have for her. They perceive her in a number of roles ranging from older sister, through mother to grandmother.	

She has developed highly professional and positive relationships with other professionals. These include child and adolescent mental health services, schools and colleges, social workers and the community police. As a result, young people benefit from an effective and holistic team, which aids and assists their development and transition into adult life. A member of staff commented, 'The manager maintains an open-door policy for everyone. She listens to us, is fair and takes action. This is one of the main reasons she maintains a happy, committed and stable staff team.'

The manager ensures that staff have appropriate training and reflective supervision opportunities that stretch and challenge their care practice. New initiatives, such as an inclusive therapeutic approach, and enhancing the skills and learning objectives of the staff team, mean that young people receive care from highly knowledgeable staff who are skilled in helping young people to reflect on their actions and make positive life choices. This enhances their welfare and increases the self-esteem and safety of all.

Effective monitoring of care plans and the progress for young people are excellent, designed to meet their specific and individual needs. The manager regularly monitors young people's progress and development in consultation with them and relevant professionals. This enables her to identify any developing patterns and trends and to take decisive action to address any areas of concerns. When necessary, she will robustly advocate for young people, ensuring that identified services are put in place, such as ensuring appropriate provision of health and educational assessments to improve outcomes for young people. A social worker said, 'I continue to be impressed by this team and the impressive care and support it provides to young people.'

Staff are immensely proud of the work they do and their contribution to the significant progress that young people make. The manager has comprehensive knowledge of the strengths and areas for improvement in the home, and this is confirmed by the independent person's monthly checks. She continually strives to maintain a service of excellence where young people flourish and develop emotional resilience for the next stage of their life. She is ambitious for the home and recognises the need to constantly update the service and maintain professional standards.

Managers and staff are confident in their approach to meeting the needs of young people. They challenge and advocate with other professionals to plan effectively for young people's futures, to ensure that they achieve the best possible outcomes for them.

What the inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against 'Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection'.

An **outstanding** children's home provides highly effective services that contribute to significantly improved outcomes for children and young people who need help and protection and care. Their progress exceeds expectations and is sustained over time.

A **good** children's home provides effective services that help, protect and care for children and young people and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

In a children's home that **requires improvement**, there are no widespread or serious failures that create or leave children being harmed or at risk of harm. The welfare of looked after is safeguarded and promoted. Minimum requirements are in place children. However, the children's home is not yet delivering good protection, help and care for children and young people.

A children's home that is **inadequate** is providing services where there are widespread or serious failures that create or leave children and young people being harmed or at risk of harm or result in children looked after not having their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people living in the children's home. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference adults make to the lives of children and young people. They read case files, watched how professional staff work with children, young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care given to children and young people. Wherever possible, they talked to children, young people and their families. In addition the inspectors have tried to understand what the children's home knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people who it is trying to help, protect and look after.

This 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 Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the 'Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards'.

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