

Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	07/01/2016
Unique reference number	SC037647
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered person	Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council
Registered person address	Municipal Buildings, Cherryfield Drive, LIVERPOOL, L32 1TX

Responsible individual	Paul Boyce
Registered manager	James De Turberville
Inspector	Sharon Lloyd

Inspection date	07/01/2016
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	Good
The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.	
how well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
the impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good

SC037647

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

Children receive person-centre care in a relaxed and friendly environment that meets their individual needs. They look forward to and enjoy well planned, short breaks. A parent explained: 'He loves going. He gets really excited. He enjoys the activities and outings and it gives us a much needed break.' Over time, children develop confident, trusting relationships with staff who interact with them with warmth, kindness and good humour.

Transitions to and from the home are well planned and supported so children receive support that helps them to experience change in a positive way.

Children's health, safety, wellbeing and happiness are at the heart of all practice within the home. Parents and professionals speak highly of the service and the way the home promotes children's development, provides enjoyable experiences and works collaboratively and openly with them.

Staff treat children with dignity and respect and follow clear whistle blowing procedures if they have any concerns about other professionals. Staff continue to improve their communication skills so they are better able to understand and communicate with children who are non-verbal. This is work in progress and more needs to be done to embed practice so that children get the most benefit from their interactions with staff and each other. Staff know children well and as far as possible, give children choices and ensure that their views are taken into account in their care.

The home consistently promotes positive behaviour. Clear boundaries help to reduce children's anxieties. Improvements in the training and support given to staff is helping to equip staff with the skills they need to understand and manage the complex and often challenging behaviour presented by children with complex learning disabilities.

The home is well led and managed. Effective monitoring of the operation of the home and children's progress and experiences ensures continuous development and improved working practices.

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

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 (England) Regulations 2015 and the *Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards*. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
35: Behaviour management policies and records Ensure that (a) within 24 hours of the use of any measure of control, discipline or restraint in relation to a child in the home, a record is made which includes all the details listed in Regulation 35, including in particular, a description of the measure and its duration and particulars of the person who used the measure (Regulation 35 (3))	13/02/2016
25: Fire precautions The registered person must ensure that the requirements of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 and any regulations made under it, are complied with in respect of the home, especially in relation to the home's fire safety risk assessment and management of fire evacuation procedures and the young people's awareness of the same (Regulation 25 (2)(b))	13/02/2016
32: Fitness of workers Ensure that, if an individual is employed by a person other than the registered person to work at the home in a position in which the individual may have regular contact with children, the registered person only allows that person to work in the home if full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the individual in respect of each of the matters in Schedule 2. In particular, ensure that satisfactory references are in place for agency staff (Regulation 32 (2)(b))	13/02/2016

Recommendations

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

- ensure that children who cannot verbalise have their views, wishes and feelings heard and respected in the same way as other children. In particular further embed the use of alternative communication methods to enhance the level of understanding and communication between children and adults and children and their peers (The Guide, page 24, para 4.24)
- further develop a culture of high aspirations for children by ensuring that staff, including agency staff, are ambitious for children and support them to reach their potential and gain self-care skills that enhance their independence (The Guide page 52, para 10.5)
- support staff to gain skills and experience that enable them to actively support each child to understand and meet each child's needs. Ensure, in particular, that staff have a good understanding about how to meet the needs of children with autistic spectrum conditions.(The Guide page 52, para 10.5)

Full report

Information about this children's home

- The home is managed by the local authority. It provides short break care for up to four children with physical and / or learning disabilities. The home is known to children and families as 'the bungalow'.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
30/03/2015	CH - Interim	sustained effectiveness
24/10/2014	CH - Full	Adequate
25/02/2014	CH - Interim	Good Progress
27/11/2013	CH - Full	Good
07/03/2013	CH - Interim	Satisfactory Progress
27/11/2012	CH - Full	Outstanding
19/03/2012	CH - Interim	Satisfactory Progress
14/11/2011	CH - Full	Outstanding
28/02/2011	CH - Interim	Good
23/11/2010	CH - Full	Good

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	good
The home provides high quality, person-centred care that meets children's individual needs. Staff know and follow detailed and comprehensive placement plans that outline children's care needs well. A parent said: 'You know they've read the care plan because they quote it back to you in conversation.' Another parent explained, 'They stick to our routines so he does the same there as at home.' Children enjoy their short breaks. They enjoy positive interactions and friendly banter with staff who are warm and friendly in their interactions with children. Children feel welcome at the home and are familiar with the routines and boundaries. This helps to reduce their anxieties and enables them to feel secure and relaxed. Children's varying and complex health needs are very well catered for and staff are trained to administer medicines and deliver health treatment in accordance with each child's needs. They follow good systems that ensure they have up to date information about children's prescribed medicines. For example, improved, confidential electronic communication systems enable staff to liaise with children's own medical consultants and obtain copies of new prescriptions and changes in health plans prior to each short break, where necessary. This ensures children receive the medicines they need in the correct doses. Since the last inspection, the home has worked with a specialist nurse advisor and parents to develop a new policy on the administration of medicines for pain and fever relief. Consequently, children who develop signs of illness receive medicines promptly, in accordance with their own health plans. Staff continue to seek medical advice appropriately when children display signs of illness. The home has good, well-established working relationships with schools. Staff transport children to and from school and speak to teachers daily about children who are currently having short breaks. They also complete a home/school diary, sharing pertinent information about the child. This good level of communication ensures that professionals and parents are well informed about children's day-to-day experiences and progress. A teacher explained, 'They give us a list every Monday about which children are going for tea visits or overnight stays that week. We liaise with staff about behaviour management strategies and although we have different routines, we try to use the same strategies and communication systems with children. It works well. We communicate well and learn from each other.'	

There is an improved focus on ensuring children get the most enjoyment possible from their short breaks. This includes a new process of taking into account friendship groups when allocating dates. This promotes positive social relationships by enabling children to attend with others they know and like. Video evidence and photographs of children having fun playing with friends helps to reassure parents that their children are safe and happy at the bungalow. A parent said: 'It's been amazing for him to have social interaction. They've paired him up with a friend so he has more fun there and it's improved his experiences. He loves it and is very excited about going.'

Transitions to and from the home are very well managed. Children benefit from personalised introductory periods that are under constant review. They have as many tea visits as they need to feel settled before staying overnight. One parent explained: 'It was difficult for us to let him go there. We felt we were failing as parents. But they have given us fabulous support the whole way. They are 100% supportive. Any little issues are dealt with and they listen to my recommendations. Every time he goes he runs in with a smile on his face and we know he's happy.'

Staff support children to move on to adult services when they reach 18. There is a well-established relationship between the home and adult respite facilities and the staff liaise effectively with parents, social workers and the adult provision. With staff support and encouragement, young people make a positive and successful transition to adult services. A professional from a partner agency explained: 'They plan ahead and move documentation over in advance so that the move is well-planned. It enables a smooth transition.'

Staff consult with children on their arrival at the home each day, to ascertain how they wish to spend their time. They discuss options for activities, outings and meal choices. They give children as much say as possible in their day-to-day care. The home has an adapted vehicle and a large car which enable staff to take children on a wide range of activities and outings. Children particularly enjoy specialist activity centres, parks, the airport viewing centre and shopping. Within the home, they enjoy playing musical instruments, artwork, the garden and a range of stimulating play equipment. This ensures children have many and varied enjoyable experiences.

Working collaboratively with parents and partner agencies on agreed targets, the home promotes the development of new skills which help children reach their potential and become more independent. A social worker explained: 'Because staff are doing the same as the foster carers, his behaviour is much better and his life is much easier. His challenging behaviour is less frequent and intense.' Targets are set and regularly reviewed in consultation with parents, social workers and teachers. Agency staff are not always fully aware of targets for individual children and this means opportunities to support children to develop new skills are sometimes missed.

Staff continue to develop skills in alternative methods of communication. The use of signing is intermittent and not yet fully embedded in day-to-day use. Staff recognise how it is increasing some children's understanding of requests and instructions and thereby helping them to complete tasks without becoming anxious or distressed.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
Parents unanimously agree that the home keeps their children safe and they are confident in the staff's ability to look after their children well. A typical comment from a parent is: 'I have no concerns. He is completely safe there.' Staff follow good risk management plans that identify children's individual safeguarding needs and outline how children are to be protected both in the home and in the community. This ensures that children's safety is central to the care they receive at the home. For example, staff know and follow procedures aimed at protecting children who receive personal care. They respect children's dignity and teach children how to become more independent in developing self-care skills wherever possible. This includes learning to wash and dry themselves through copying staff. The home consistently promotes positive behaviour, providing good routines and clear boundaries that help children to feel safe and secure. Staff receive regular advice and training in positive behaviour support from a specialist behaviour support team. This helps to enhance staff skills in responding to individual children's complex behaviour and communication difficulties. Consequently, they interact more effectively with children who become less anxious and more settled, over time. This enables children to increasingly enjoy their time at the bungalow. Restraint is rarely and appropriately used to prevent children from hurting themselves or others. Records of restraints are routinely reviewed by the manager and independent visitor which ensures the manager has a good overview of the use of restraint in the home. The manager follows up incidents with the staff involved to ensure reflection on incidents and possible improvements in practice. Records of restraint are detailed but do not always show the length of time the child was restrained for or full details of how and by whom the child was held. This does not ensure open and transparent recording of incidents in a way that is helpful to children and their parents. Staff protect children from potential abuse by following the home's child protection	

procedures. They note, record and communicate any unexplained injuries to managers and other relevant people, as appropriate. This ensures that safeguarding agencies are made aware of any concerns for children's safety.

Staff understand whistle-blowing procedures but have not always followed them in accordance with the home's policy. Consequently, incidents of poor practice have not always been notified to the manager immediately. This shortfall has been addressed and all staff have been reminded of the expected standards. Training in the role of the local authority designate officer is scheduled to ensure staff know and fully understand their safeguarding duties.

With the exception to the door to the garden, external doors are usually kept locked in line with children's safety needs. This prevents children from accessing the carpark and the road without staff and is recorded in individual placement plans. When boarding the minibus or car, children are supported to do so safely. Children who wish to go out are escorted by staff. No children have been missing from the home since the last inspection.

Good health and safety measures protect children by ensuring the environment is safe and clean. Fire safety checks are routinely carried out and all staff receive fire safety training. Not all children and staff have participated in a recent fire drill. This does not ensure they are practised in evacuating the home in an emergency.

Robust recruitment and selection processes ensure that permanent members of staff are fully vetted and are deemed safe to work with children. Information held about agency staff members is less detailed and the home does not hold evidence that employer and personal references have been taken up on these people. This does not ensure that agency staff have been fully vetted and are suitable to work with children.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
The home is effectively managed by an experienced, manager who is a qualified social worker with many years' experience of working with children with complex needs and disabilities. He has been the registered manager of the home since 2010. Promoting respect, equality and diversity is central to his practice. He drives improvement in the home through effective engagement with staff and good leadership. The manager is ably assisted by two long standing, competent deputy managers. Individual staff members take the lead for developing aspects of the service. This	

enables them to develop their skills and to invest more fully in promoting good outcomes for children. For example, different staff lead on transition work, communication with children, developing activities and promoting relationships with parents. All of these aspects of the service have improved since the last inspection.

Key workers report to their line manager and through regular, supportive supervision, they are guided to assess and review children's progress, and to work with parents and other agencies. This promotes children's health and wellbeing and ensures they receive good care and have enjoyable opportunities and experiences during their short breaks. The manager oversees children's progress through regular consultation in one to one supervision and staff meetings. Managers know the children and their needs well.

Through targeted small steps, children develop new skills over time. This is achieved through encouragement and without pressure on children. The home's emphasis on developing positive relationships and providing a safe and happy environment for children ensures that children get the most from their short breaks.

The training programme has been developed and staff engage in a rolling programme that provides them with the skills they need to provide, for the most part, good quality care to children. An increasing number of children who have short breaks at the home have autism spectrum conditions. Although all staff have received basic training in autism awareness, few have done more in-depth training. Progress in meeting a recommendation to address this issue that was made in October 2014, has been too slow. Consequently, not all staff have a good understanding of autism and the many ways it can impact on children's behaviour, social skills and communication. Staff are keen to learn more and further develop their skills so they can support each child in the best possible way.

The statement of purpose has been rewritten to take account of the quality standards. It accurately reflects the service provided. Each child has a bespoke children's guide which parents use effectively with children to help prepare them for their next short break. In addition, photographs of the staff who are on duty are shared with some children at school the day before their visit. This helps to reduce anxieties for those children who struggle with change.

The home has very good relationships with parents and partner agencies and is promoting the development of a parent support group. In addition, staff provide guidance to a small minority of parents and help them develop more effective behaviour management strategies. This helps children to have more consistent care and be more settled and relaxed.

A wide range of professionals and parents contributed to the inspection and all spoke very highly of the staff team and the quality of the service. A typical comment from a professional is: 'Staff are really helpful. There is nothing they can

do better;' and parent's views are typically expressed by the following comment:
'They are very flexible and support our whole family. We can ring them at any time of the day or night. I'm a big fan'.

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 children is safeguarded and promoted. Minimum requirements are in place, 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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