

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC037647
Inspector	Sharon Lloyd
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Registered person	Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council
Registered person address	Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council, Education Offices Huyton Hey Road LIVERPOOL L36 5YH
Responsible individual	Paul Boyce
Registered manager	James Robert Allan De Turberville
Date of last inspection	25/02/2014

Inspection date	24/10/2014
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Previous inspection	good progress
Enforcement action since last inspection	none

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

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	adequate
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The home effectively provides personalised, well-planned care that takes account of children and young people's individual needs and promotes positive outcomes. Children and young people receive high quality support from staff that promotes their enjoyment of their short breaks and helps them to develop greater independence. Staff follow safe working practices and respond promptly to children's needs, ensuring their health and safety needs are well met. Unsafe situations are well-managed by staff and this reduces the risk of harm to children and young people.

A key strength of the home is the nurture and warmth with which staff care for children and young people. Parents report that children and young people look forward to and enjoy their short stays. Parents trust the staff and say they look after highly vulnerable children very well.

The home is continually developing and improving its quality of care. For example, staff are undergoing training that is enhancing their ability to understand and communicate with children who are pre-verbal. Staff listen to children and young people carefully and give them opportunities to contribute to the day to day running of the home during their short stay. For example, children and young people choose how to spend their time, influence activities and outings and choose their own

menus. Empowering children and young people in this way helps them to develop self-esteem and confidence and gives them a degree of control over their lives.

The home operates in accordance with its Statement of Purpose. Leaders and managers understand the strengths and weaknesses of the home and have development plans in place. They take action to improve following any identified shortfalls in practice.

Recruitment practices involving internal transfers of staff to the home undermine the home's otherwise safe recruitment practices. Some staff have gaps in their training in that they have not been trained in the particular needs of the children and young people who use the service.

Fire safety records do not demonstrate that all staff, children and young people participate in fire drills. Not all children have a copy of the children's guide to the home that suits their needs and level of understanding.

Full report

Information about this children's home

This is a local authority children's home providing short breaks for up to four children with learning or physical disabilities. Most of the children staying for short breaks are not in the care of the local authority and their parents have the primary responsibility for their health care and education.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
25/02/2014	Interim	good progress
27/11/2013	Full	good
07/03/2013	Interim	satisfactory progress
27/11/2012	Full	outstanding

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
32 (2001)	ensure by means of fire drills and practices at suitable intervals, that the persons working at the home and, so far as practicable, children accommodated there, are aware of the procedure to be followed in case of fire (Regulation 32 (1)(e))	29/11/2014
33 (2001)	ensure that the independent person, when carrying out a visit, shall (a) interview, with their consent and in private, such of the children accommodated there, their parents, relatives and persons working at the children's home as appears necessary in order to form an opinion as to whether (i) children	29/11/2014

	are effectively safeguarded; and (ii) their wellbeing is promoted (Regulation 33 (8)(a))	
26 (2001)	do not employ a person to work at the children's home unless full and satisfactory information is available in relation to him in respect of each of the matters specified in Schedule 2 (Regulation 26 (1),(2)(d))	29/11/2014
4 (2001)	ensure that the children's guide to the home is produces in a form appropriate to the age, understanding and communication needs of the children accommodated in the home and supply a copy to HMCI and to each child, on admission to the home. (Regulation 4 (4))	31/01/2015

Recommendations

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

- ensure all care staff are equipped with the skills to meet the needs of the children and the purpose of the setting. In particular, train all staff in the care of children with epilepsy, autistic spectrum conditions and learning disabilities and ensure all staff are trained in equality and diversity (NMS 18.1)

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **good**

Children and young people with a range of complex disabilities benefit from and enjoy short breaks at the home. They are relaxed and happy and enjoy the many opportunities to participate in relaxing and/or stimulating activities and outings. A young person said, 'I like to go out when I come here. We go to the park and that's good fun. Sometimes we go to the pictures or the pub or a Chinese buffet.' Children and young people enjoy the sensory play equipment and spending time listening to music, watching television and participating in arts and crafts, in accordance with their interests and abilities. Some attend local clubs and all enjoy outings in the minibus, including outings to a soft play centre and the airport viewing centre.

Many of the children and young people are pre-verbal and some use alternative methods of communication. They are usually able to make their feelings and views known to staff who are observant of and receptive to their non-verbal cues. Staff consult with children and young people on the first day of each stay and take account of their views when planning activities and trips. This ensures children and young people have a say in how they are looked after and what they do during each short break. Parents report that children and young people look forward to their short breaks. One young person said, 'I like coming here. The staff are nice and friendly.'

Children and young people enjoy spending time with peers and wherever possible, short breaks are arranged to ensure children who are friends have time at the home together. This enhances their experience of the home. A parent said the home is 'the only place outside school where my child can still play with peers.' A social worker responsible for the placement of several children, said, 'All the children get a lot out of it; it's like having a little sleep-over with their friends which they would not otherwise be able to do.'

Over time, many children and young people develop increasing independence and improve their self-care skills. Their behaviour becomes more socially acceptable. A social worker reported that children with demanding and challenging behaviour reduce their aggression and improve their behaviour as a result of short breaks at the home. She said, 'A lot of families would break down without the support of this service. Staff work really well with young people.'

Children and young people's health needs are well promoted. Staff meet the individual health needs of each child and young person and administer medication and treatment as required. They respond promptly to any health concerns and this ensures children and young people receive medication and specialist services without delay. A young person described how he was well looked after by staff when he was ill at the home. Children and young people recognise that their good health is important to staff.

Children and young people's individual needs are well catered for. This includes their dietary needs and preferences. One young person said, 'I like the food. It's nice and they cook things I like. I can choose because they ask me what I want.' Mealtimes are social occasions and children and young people receive support to partake of their meals around the dining table, together, wherever possible. This helps them to learn from each other and to develop social skills and socially acceptable behaviour.

Children and young people and their parents are well prepared and supported by the home for transition to adult services. This ensures a smooth transition to a suitable placement, at the pace of the young person.

Quality of care

good

Staff provide a high level of nurture and interact with children and young people with consistent warmth and kindness. This helps them to develop sound and positive relationships with children and young people, who recognise that staff care about them. Children and young people report that the best thing about the home is the staff. One said, 'Staff love me coming. They are like family'. Several parents said that staff take care of children as well as they do themselves. One said, 'Staff take over my role and they do a fab job'.

Following extensive consultation with parents, the home draws up detailed placement plans which inform individually tailored care for children and young people. Staff work closely with parents and school to promote improved outcomes. For example, they follow the routines and behaviour management strategies used at home and school to support a young person to reduce their anxieties associated with Obsessive Compulsive Disorder. They follow advice from specialists that helps them to support young people with complex and challenging behaviour. By clearly focusing on the best ways to support each individual, the homes help to reduce anti-social behaviour. Children and young people respond well to the clear boundaries provided within a nurturing environment.

The home works collaboratively with school and health professionals. This ensures staff provide good support for children and young people's health and education. With guidance from school, staff are developing their skills in the use of alternative communication methods that are used by individual children and young people. This is increasing their ability to communicate with and meet the needs of some young people. As a result, those young people are more relaxed and more actively engaged in the home.

Complaints about the home are rare. Since the last inspection, two young people have made a complaint. This was dealt with promptly and to the satisfaction of both the young people and their parents. The manager takes account of all comments made by parents, social workers and children and uses them to drive improvements

in the service. Feedback from a recent parent survey was unanimously very positive. This boosts the moral of the staff team and encourages them to continue providing a high quality service.

Children and young people are well looked after by staff who know them very well. Parents report that although a key worker is appointed, all staff are familiar with the individual needs of children and young people. Careful consideration is given to matching. This ensures that staff meet the needs of each child and young people on a short break.

Keeping children and young people safe adequate

The routines of the home promote the safety and well-being of children and young people, who report they feel safe in the home. Regular health and safety checks on the premises ensure that children and young people have short breaks in a home that is well-maintained, clean and safe.

The safety and welfare of children and young people is central to practice within the home. Staff know and follow good child protection procedures. They respect and safeguard children and young people's dignity by following safe care practices. Individual risk assessments take account of the particular vulnerabilities of each child or young person and guide staff to provide person-centred, pro-active, safe care. This protects children and young people from the risk of harm. Staff are confident that any concerns about children are appropriately and fully explored and as a result children and young people feel safe in the home.

Staff know children and young people's trigger points and take action to prevent assaults and injuries to others, wherever possible. Where minor injuries do occur, these are well documented and children and young people receive first aid and emotional support as required. In many cases, staff successfully take action to avert and de-escalate situations resulting from children and young people's rising anxieties. This usually prevents children and young people from being exposed to injury or aggression.

Restraint and additional measures of control are rarely used at the home and only as a last resort. Staff sometimes guide children and young people away from an unsafe situation and record this appropriately as a physical intervention. The views of children and young people have not always been obtained following such incidents but log books have been updated to ensure that children's views are considered in the event of a restraint in the future.

There has been one incident of a child going missing from the home since the last inspection. This is the first incident in 15 years. The home took immediate and robust action which secured the safe return of the child. An investigation by the manager has resulted in improved safety measures aimed at preventing a child from leaving

the premises by climbing over gates or through windows. The home has increased the level of supervision for this child who is known to go missing from other places. The child's parent is satisfied with the action taken to protect this and other children.

Robust recruitment practices are not followed in every case. As a result, full and satisfactory checks are not always carried out on staff transferring to the home from other services within the local authority. For example, up to date written references are not always obtained and the reason for staff ceasing to work with vulnerable people is not always logged. This undermines the otherwise safe recruitment practices. It does not fully ensure the suitability of staff caring for children and young people.

The home routinely carries out fire safety equipment checks and most but not all staff have completed training in fire safety. This means that the home cannot be assured that all staff know what to do in the event of a fire at the home. Evacuation procedures are practised regularly and there have been five fire drills since the last inspection. The record of these drills does not indicate which staff, children and young people were involved in the drill. This does not demonstrate that all staff, children and young people have practised and know what to do in the event of an emergency evacuation.

Leadership and management

adequate

The manager of the home is suitably qualified to manage the home, with a Masters degree in social work and a Level 4 NVQ in the management of a children's home. He is currently enrolled on the Level 5 Diploma with the intention of further enhancing his leadership and management skills. He has a wealth of experience in working with children with complex needs and disabilities over a period of 22 years. He has been the registered manager of this home since 2010.

The manager receives professional supervision from a senior officer within children's services and this enables him to reflect on his own practice and provide strong leadership for the staff team. There are 18 care staff working at the home. Many of these are long-standing staff and a high proportion of them are qualified and very experienced in providing social care to children with disabilities. Staff are dedicated to the children and young people and work well as a team. They benefit from regular, reflective and good quality supervision and this helps them to provide consistent, high quality care. Parents say staff are 'welcoming, approachable and understanding'.

The manager knows the strengths and weaknesses of the home and engages the staff team in developing the service to better meet children and young people's needs. For example, he has appointed a member of staff to lead the home's transition practice and other staff are engaged in developing improved practice around securing children and young people's views, wishes and feelings.

The home's aims and objectives are clearly outlined in the Statement of Purpose, which is currently being updated and improved. A draft copy was available for inspection. This provides an easy to read account of the services provided. The manager intends to share it with parents and commissioners in the near future.

Some children and young people have personalised children's guides that are presented in a format that meets their needs. These are useful documents that help families prepare children and young people for their short breaks. This is a work in progress and most children and young people do not yet have a children's guide to the home in a format that suits their communication style even though they have been accessing the home for several months or years. This means it is harder for parents to talk to children and young people about the home and prepare them for their short breaks, especially where children and young people have limited communication skills.

The manager actively monitors the operation of the home and knows the children and young people well. He consults with them informally and ensures their views are listened to and recorded through regular consultation with staff and key worker sessions. He takes action to address any concerns. An independent reviewing officer visits the home on behalf of the provider and assesses the quality of care and the safeguarding arrangements. He routinely speaks with staff and with children and young people present during the visit. However, he does not consult parents. This is a missed opportunity for an independent person to gather the views of parents about the operation of the home and the care provided.

The home's relationships with placing social workers is improving because the local authority has taken steps to increase communication between professionals within children's services. Staff record important information onto electronic records that are accessible by social work staff. This ensures the prompt and easy sharing of information. The manager is based away from the home, with social work staff and this enables him to follow up any concerns or missing information directly. As a result the home is having greater success in obtaining key documents such as short break plans within reasonable timescales. However, these are not in place for all children and young people. The impact of this shortfall is minimal. This is because the home produces and follows comprehensive placement plans based on information provided by parents and health professionals.

Staff receive sufficient training to enable them to provide good quality, safe care. However, a number of staff have not completed training relating to the specific needs of the children and young people who have short breaks at the service. In particular, some staff have not completed training in caring for children and young people with epilepsy, autism and learning disabilities. This does not ensure staff have the knowledge and skills that would enable them to provide the best quality care for children and young people with these conditions.

Local authority budget cuts have been well managed so that their impact on the care

of children and young people is negligible. The manager has successfully secured a grant to assist with the purchase of new play equipment for the garden. Some parents have identified a need for more sensory equipment and the manager has taken account of their views and is pursuing this. The home has a people-carrier and shares an adapted vehicle with the outreach team. Some staff say this reduces the opportunities for children and young people who use wheelchairs to have the same number and quality of outings as those who are able-bodied. The manager is reviewing this to ensure that no children and young people are disadvantaged.

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.