

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	29 March 2016
Unique reference number	SC040633
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered manager	Sharon Newton
Inspector	Kevin Whatley

Inspection date	29 March 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	Good
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Outstanding

SC040633

Summary of findings

- Young people make outstanding progress at the home. The quality of relationships between them and the adults who care for them is a core strength of the home.
- Young people benefit greatly from placement stability with highly individualised levels of guidance and support.
- Young people say, 'this is my home', 'we love the staff', and 'I have grown up since being here'.
- Staff are committed to meeting the complex needs of young people and do so in a skilled and caring way.
- The promotion of learning enables young people to make significant progress. This results in consistently high levels of attendance at school and vast improvements in levels of engagement and achievement.
- Young people have their emotional well-being met to the highest standards. An excellent approach to engaging partner agencies results in shared goals where young people receive specialist help and intervention when they need it.
- This is a home that aspires to wanting the very best for young people. The experienced and conscientious management team have high expectations of care and practice. As a result, the needs of young people always come first.

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
44: Independent person: visits and reports '4 The independent person must produce a report about a visit ('the independent person's report') which sets out, in particular, the independent person's opinion as to whether— (a) young people are effectively safeguarded; and (b) the conduct of the home promotes young people's welfare; with particular reference to the review of restraints in the home	30 May 2016

Recommendations

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

- The registered person should ensure that all incidents of control, discipline and restraint are subject to systems of regular scrutiny to ensure that their use is fair; in particular ensure that records accurately reflect the exact type of restraint used and its duration ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 46, paragraph 9.36)

Full report

Information about this children's home

This home is owned and managed by a local authority. It provides care and accommodation for up to five children and young people who may have emotional or behavioural disorders.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
26 November 2015	CH – Interim	sustained effectiveness
30 March 2015	CH – Interim	sustained effectiveness
15 January 2015	CH – Full	outstanding
27 March 2014	CH – Interim	good progress

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Outstanding
Young people benefit hugely from strong and positive relationships that enable them to engage wholeheartedly with staff. As a result, they are able to get through difficult periods, remain settled and make excellent progress. Young people said: 'this is the longest placement I have had'; 'I know staff care'; 'this is my home'. Parents noted: 'I cannot fault the home'; 'staff are wonderful'; '(name of young person) has made fantastic progress and is so much more open'. Care professionals praise the home, the efforts of staff and the progress made by young people. One social worker stated that, '(name of young person) has settled much more than expected, has developed strong bonds with staff and has made brilliant progress since living at the home'. Young people treat each other with respect and understanding. The feeling of the home is one of mutual appreciation of difference. Staff work tirelessly to help young people live together appropriately. This results in a home where young people resolve their differences by talking and being encouraged to see things from another's perspective. For example, when a young person returned upset from a family visit, staff made sure that the other young people were aware of the situation and reminded them of their own similar experiences. The behaviour between young people is therefore caring and supportive, which influences the calm and relaxed atmosphere. The commitment of staff to provide consistently high standards of care and support for young people is the cornerstone of practice. For instance, young people who were anxious as they approached a move out of care relied on the trusting relationships to express their fears, concerns and frustrations appropriately. Staff worked closely with the young people's families to ensure that all transitions occurred at a pace most beneficial to the young people. This meant that they experienced positive and successful transitions back to their families. Such an approach not only promotes the young person's individual development and wishes, but also helps repair family relationships to a point where they can live together once more. Young people live in a home that provides them with a high standard of accommodation and facilities. This has been improved with new bathrooms/showers and a redecoration of all the living areas. The building offers a large amount of space inside and out. Young people decorate their rooms with	

posters and personal belongings and are encouraged to do so in a way that matches their wishes. For example, by choosing to have a bunk bed-style bedroom. Outdoor activity equipment provides increased opportunities for young people to lead healthy lives. In particular, the trampoline and the football pitch are well used. The manner in which the home is furnished provides young people with an environment that looks and feels extremely family-orientated.

Young people clearly have a voice in the home. Regular meetings take place, with their requests taken seriously and acted upon. For instance, young people help choose the menu and were central to choosing and planning the recent group holiday abroad. The culture is open, with young people clearly confident to express their views and opinions in the presence of staff and managers. This means that they are included in decision making and made to feel part of the home. Young people are also members of the youth council, and their participation influences the children in care agenda within the wider context of social care.

A thorough admission procedure ensures that due consideration is given to the complexities of each young person and the dynamics of the current young person group. This enables a clear emphasis on matching prospective new young people with the needs of the whole living group. This is particularly important given the level of complex emotional needs that many young people have. As a result, the atmosphere of the home is lively but settled, with young people mixing well and respecting each other.

The approach to care planning is therapeutic in nature with excellent programmes of care that ensure that the needs of young people are continually assessed and met holistically. Young people are fully involved in developing care plans and contribute to setting their own targets. For example, in acknowledging that they need support to address their anger issues or difficult family relationships. Each young person's identity is valued and any specific needs, whether cultural or religious, form the basis of care and intervention. Care plans provide staff with clear guidance as to how to meet the needs of young people and they are followed in practice. They also highlight the involvement of partner agencies so ensure cohesive multi-agency strategies. This means that young people receive consistent care and support and expert help when they need it.

Therapeutic care permeates the culture of the home. This culminates in young people receiving outstanding care to meet their emotional and psychological needs. The skills and expertise of the staff team mean that they fully understand the impact of childhood trauma on emotional development. This enables them to appreciate the importance of stability, adult boundaries and nurture alongside specialised intervention. For instance, their support for emotional well-being through a focus on key-working in the home complements the regular therapy with mental health professionals in the community. Staff can provide fundamental play therapy and use such a method appropriately to allow young people an alternative, safe option to express their feelings. The delivery of such an approach is provided

only when in conjunction with the therapists working with the young person as part of the whole therapeutic intervention. As a result, young people markedly improve their feelings of low self-esteem and confidence and make significant progress in reducing their self-harming behaviours.

Close working with the local looked after children nurse ensures that young people receive regular advice and guidance, such as on sexual health, in the privacy of their own home. Young people are helped to attend routine medical appointments and to lead healthy lifestyles. This includes the enthusiastic staff taking the young people swimming and to the gym.

A comprehensive assessment process is in place to review the needs of young people against their initial care plan. Such reviews allow for a detailed consideration of all aspects of individual need. These consultations take place regularly and include the involvement of the whole staff team and participation from professionals in the community. This enables all contributors of the care plan to review its effectiveness and subsequent progress.

This is a home where education is highly valued and promoted. There is an established culture that encourages young people to attend and engage in their learning. All young people attend school or college, with attendance levels consistently close to 100%. Local authorities are appropriately challenged to ensure education plans are forthcoming. For many young people, their progress has been outstanding given that they arrived with histories of poor attendance and engagement. Young people have progressed to sit exams when previously they had not attended school for long periods of time. They regularly receive awards for their efforts not only from the schools and colleges themselves but also from the local authority and care council.

Young people enjoy nutritious meals and a healthy diet is promoted. The home caters for individual dietary needs and preferences. Young people say the food is 'very good'. Regular meetings take place with young people to plan forthcoming menus and consider different meal options. Meal times are an important part of the daily routines of the home where young people and staff come together as a living group. Important events are celebrated, such as birthdays, with staff and young people fully involved in making them memorable. The homely ethos comes out in these informal yet respectful occasions where the relaxed atmosphere enables open discussion to take place easily.

Young people receive excellent support and encouragement to enjoy activities and pursue their interests. The routines of the home are set to provide structure, but at the same time are flexible and responsive to each young person's individual needs. Young people can choose to participate in sports such as swimming. They are also encouraged to join local clubs and participate in their community. For instance, by regularly attending scouts, guides and youth clubs. This has not only provided them with new and exciting pastimes, but has invigorated them to use their free

time constructively alongside engaging in activities that have greatly developed their confidence and self-esteem. In addition, the experience has also helped young people to develop appropriate peer relationships outside of the home. This includes having their friends round to visit them at the home. For some young people who previously struggled with friendships, this seemingly normal event is a major step forward in improving their social skills.

Young people enjoy exciting opportunities to experience the world. Last month the whole group and staff went on holiday to Iceland. Young people helped plan the trip, including choosing the destination, contributing to the itinerary and adding their views to risk assessments. The holiday was a huge success, with young people describing a most memorable experience. This included bathing in volcanically heated pools and going whale watching. The fact that the holiday involved all young people and staff and indeed took in a slightly more uncommon destination is testament to the confidence and expertise of the adults. This meant that the whole group was able to share valuable life experiences and further cement the bonds already in place.

Contact with families, friends and those people important to young people are promoted within the confines of placement agreements. Young people have easy access to phones, and most have their own. Staff are very supportive of such arrangements, with social workers commenting positively about the manner in which visits are facilitated and the caring nature of staff.

Young people are given considerable support and guidance as part of learning independence skills. Care planning takes account of the longer term needs of young people and in particular pathway plans. The management and staff are proactive at challenging placing authorities who do not have such plans in place, with a clear focus on the need to equip young people for their lives once they leave the home. Older young people work through bespoke programmes of gaining and improving life care skills. This includes living on a budget, shopping and cooking their own meals. One-to-one sessions with staff focus on considering the realities of life after leaving residential care. Such an approach assists in alleviating anxieties and enhances the chances of successful transitions.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
Young people are safe living in the home and receive intensive support to reduce their risk-taking behaviours. They say that they feel safe with no reported episodes of bullying. Good levels of staff supervision further reduce the risk of incidents occurring unnoticed. The positive relationships shared between staff and young	

people enables them to feel safe enough to discuss their fears and concerns. This has helped young people come to terms with their own vulnerabilities and become safer as a result.

Good links with the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) ensure that all child protection policies and procedures are consistent and agreed. The manager maintains appropriate links with the LSCB and the Local Authority Designated Officer. This ensures swift actions are taken in line with local and national protocols.

Young people receive excellent support and intervention to address their concerning and risky behaviours. This is particularly relevant for those who are vulnerable to exploitation. Aside from liaising effectively with the police, schools and colleges and safeguarding teams, the home take a proactive stance in obtaining specialised services for young people. For instance, in seeking programmes of awareness and risk reduction and taking the lead in establishing multi-agency plans that include young people being engaged in one-to-one work by experts in the field of preventing child sexual exploitation. All young people have completed courses in online exploitation and say that they have gained a far greater awareness of how to keep safe as a result. This has meant a significant reduction in risk-taking behaviours for those young people who had previously placed themselves at risk.

The home has been successful in considerably reducing the occasions when young people leave the home without permission. There have been no incidents for a year or more. Protocols developed with local police aim to protect young people from their own risky behaviours and from exploitation by others. This includes staff actively seeking young people and liaising effectively with partner agencies. Individual risk assessments provide a balance between acknowledging risk, incorporating agreed safety plans and supporting young people to engage in the community. This allows them to develop self-protection strategies as well as social and life skills.

Young people live in a home where the expectations of behaviour are appropriately high. They say that they understand the rules and comment that they are 'fair'. The focus is on seeking resolution to difficulties through a restorative approach. The home has applied to become a benchmarked home for providing such intervention. Staff are skilled at utilising their relationships with young people to help them to improve their behaviour. Each young person has a set of individualised aims and objectives to attain, such as reducing swearing, sticking to supervision agreements and keeping their rooms tidy. The continuous focus on positive reinforcement reduces the need to use sanctions. Behaviour during the inspection was excellent, with young people treating staff and each other with respect and understanding.

The use of physical intervention is appropriate. The level of restraint is relatively

low. Individual risk assessments, known to all staff, provide further safeguards to young people, and detail the forms of restraint that can be utilised. Staff are restraint-trained with physical intervention used only as a last resort. In general, records are accurate and include the events leading to the restraint and the type of intervention used. However, one record lacked details of the length of time that a particular hold was applied. This gave the impression of a potentially inappropriate intervention. Other records and evidence showed this to be untrue. While this shortfall does not place young people at risk, there is a need to improve the accuracy of records.

The health and safety of young people are taken seriously. Regular fire drills ensure that young people know how to evacuate the building safely. Routine checks and tests of equipment and the living environment mean that the home is safe to live in.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Outstanding
The management of the home is outstanding. The registered manager and her team show a relentless commitment to meeting the specific needs of young people to the highest standards. The registered manager is highly experienced and holds the required level 4 award in leadership and management alongside a Masters degree in therapeutic childcare. The registered manager and her deputy work tirelessly in promoting the individual needs of young people and expect appropriately high levels of practice from the staff team and other professionals. This culminates in a culture where young people come first. Social workers confirmed that the home is run in a way that places the individual needs of young people as the paramount concern. This was particularly notable in the way in which the staff remain committed to young people who initially struggled to settle and who presented with highly challenging behaviours. Other care professionals noted the high levels of communication and integrity and unstinting focus on working together for the benefit of young people. The past few months have at times proved testing. In such a stable home where young people have lived for long periods of time, leavings are always going to evoke strong feelings. Some young people found it hard to cope with their overwhelming emotions, and these had to be contained by staff. This meant staff having their experience and robustness tested. However, the strength and resolve of the staff team meant that young people quickly settled and continued to make significant progress, both in the home and in their new placements.	

A suitable complaints process is in place and no complaints have, so far, been made. Young people know how to complain should they wish. The atmosphere is open, with the importance of independent support and advice actively promoted. As a result, a number of young people have independent advocates who meet them regularly and offer impartial guidance and advice. The registered manager is currently pursuing the local advocacy service to provide more resources to ensure that young people do not have to experience unacceptable waiting periods to be matched.

Excellent levels of inter-agency working are in place to ensure that young people receive the services that they require. This includes the home seeking clear decisions and resources. For example, the registered manager has appropriately challenged partner agencies to put in place education packages at the earliest possible opportunity. This means that unnecessary delays are avoided and external partners are given clear messages of the expectations placed on them by the home to meet individual needs.

Excellent internal monitoring processes are in place that routinely assess, review and evaluate the quality of care. The registered manager and her senior team complete regular reviews of care that are outstanding. The reports are far reaching and use data to evaluate the particular progress of each young person against the quality standards. The findings of monitoring reports inform the home's development plan which, in turn, highlights the importance of seeking the most up-to-date ways of meeting the complex needs of young people in residential care. For instance, by considering the benefits of implementing elements of social pedagogy to enhance outcomes.

Independent monitoring occurs monthly. The reports of the visits lack robustness. They convey a general review of the quality of care provision, include young people's views and relate to the quality standards. However, they do not consistently assess the appropriateness or impact of care practices. For example, a recent report noted the details of restraints but did not go on to state whether their use was appropriate. Neither did they arrive at a conclusion as to whether the well-being of young people was safeguarded overall. Although it doesn't place young people at risk, this shortfall detracts from the otherwise highly effective monitoring and evaluation systems.

Young people are cared for by a stable group of highly experienced adults who are committed to providing the highest levels of care. Very good numbers of staff are available to care for young people. There has been some shortage of staff and this problem has been met by existing staff working additional hours. Staff say that they willingly do this to maintain consistency and relationships, which is testament to their therapeutic training. A recruitment process is currently underway. Young people are involved in interviewing prospective staff and speak proudly of being a part of choosing what makes a good career. Good levels of routine training are provided, and all staff hold a relevant qualification in care. Recent programmes

have addressed child sexual exploitation, radicalisation and child development.

Staff receive excellent support and guidance. Regular formal supervision encompasses a qualitative approach which takes account of personal development and encourages improvement. For instance, one-to-one meetings include delegating and reviewing areas of responsibility, which enhances staff learning and builds strength in the team. For instance, a member of staff leading on new therapeutic models of working, attending training and disseminating this back to the whole team. In addition, the staff team receives clinical supervision as a group where adult dynamics are considered as well as the impact and effectiveness of individual care plans. Staff said: 'I truly love working here'; 'we get great support and leadership'; 'it is fantastic watching young people grow'.

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 children looked after 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 that 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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