

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	27/02/2017
Unique reference number	SC067753
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered person	West Sussex County Council
Registered person address	Director of Social Services, County Hall, Tower Street, Chichester, West Sussex PO19 1QT
Responsible individual	Annie MacIver
Registered manager	Dominic Riches
Inspector	Jennie Christopher

Inspection date	27/02/2017
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

SC067753

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- Young people make good progress socially and emotionally while living in the home or accessing the short-break service. They develop skills for independence, such as self-care, eating meals with others or spending time away from their family. Staff employ a variety of tools to support young people to learn new life skills and these are well documented in their individual plans.
- Staff work well as teams in both areas of the home; they have an excellent understanding of each young person's needs. They spend time with each young person to understand how their day has been or how they are feeling.
- Staff are keen to hear young people's views and actively seek their opinion. Staff have had training in specific communication techniques and use now and next strips, social stories and Makaton among other bespoke styles to maximise interaction and understanding with young people.
- Young people are treated as individuals, and increasingly do not have to be part of the group all of the time if they do not wish to. Young people's plans are clear and have been developed to become more detailed and individualised, with clear goals and targets.
- Staff have an excellent understanding of each young person's vulnerabilities and do all they can to protect them. Young people's actions and demeanour demonstrate that they feel safe in the home and they are confident in approaching staff to support them and meet their needs.
- Staff work effectively as a team to promote positive behaviour. There has been a particular drive in this area, with staff now working in teams in designated areas of the home so that they can focus on fewer young people, and this promotes greater consistency.
- The new manager continues to make significant changes to the home and service, at a pace that staff can manage without any negative impact on the young people. The new responsible individual, who is also the social work team manager, strengthens the team. Consequently, joint working is very strong.
- Areas for development as a result of this inspection include: not leaving young people's plans in communal areas; ensuring that all staff recruitment information is available within the home; and seeking young people's views with greater effect after an incident or physical intervention.

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 within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
14: The care planning standard: In order to meet the care planning standard, the registered person is required to ensure: (2)(a) that children are admitted to the home only if their needs are within the range of needs of children for whom it is intended that the home is to provide care and accommodation, as set out in the home's statement of purpose. (Regulation 14(2)(a))	30/05/2017
Ensure that the privacy of children is appropriately protected. (Regulation 21(a)) This specifically refers to ensuring that young people's personal information is not kept in a communal area and confidentiality is protected for each young person.	30/05/2017
The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety. The registered person may only employ an individual to work at the children's home; or, if full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the individual in respect of each of the matters in Schedule 2. (Regulation 32(3)(d)) In particular, the registered person must follow safer recruitment practice with regards to seeking references and verifying gaps in employment.	30/05/2017

Recommendations

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

- Ensure that the home is a nurturing and supportive environment that is homely. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)
This specifically refers to ensuring that the home is not being used for external meetings.
- Ensure that medication records are accurate for young people who have recently been admitted to the home. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 35, paragraph 7.15)
- Ensure that each young person's individual communication need is taken into account to be able to gain their views following incidents of restraint or challenging behaviours. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 49, paragraph 9.60)

Full report

Information about this children's home

This local authority children's home provides care and support for a maximum of 16 children and young people with complex needs. The home can accommodate children and young people who have both physical and learning disabilities, some of whom may display challenging behaviour. The home provides permanent placements and short breaks.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
26/09/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
09/02/2016	Full	Good
01/09/2015	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
20/02/2015	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
Young people make good progress as a result of accessing the short-break service or living in the home. Staff work well as teams in the two areas of the home and have an excellent understanding of each young person's needs. They spend time with each young person to understand how their day has been or how they are feeling when they wake up. For example, a member of staff explained the structured morning routine that a young person has in order to prevent him from becoming agitated while waiting to go to school. The staff member was seen to talk to the young person clearly and calmly so he knew what was happening next and at what time. The young person responded well and remained calm and focused on his current task. Staff are keen to hear young people's views and actively seek their opinion. Staff have had training in specific communication techniques, and use now and next strips, social stories and Makaton among other bespoke styles for individual young people. Their views are sought on a range of matters, from what activity they would like to do, to communicating a bereavement and exploring how the individual would like to mark their loss. All young people attend school as programmed. There is extremely close liaison with education professionals and many young people walk to school with staff assistance, enabling a handover both morning and afternoon. A parent commented about the progress their child has made and was pleased that the home was using the same approaches as school for communication. Young people enjoy a range of socially and emotionally stimulating activities, such as trips to the seafront and local parks, and arts and crafts and games within the home. The manager is driving staff to focus on the purpose of activities and what the young person will be gaining from that experience, to ensure that they have the opportunity to try new things rather than continuing an activity simply because it fits with the group. Young people are encouraged to develop skills to help them prepare for adulthood or for managing in community situations. Particular successes include a young person who could not tolerate others and ate his meals away from the group, now remaining in what was a busy and at times noisy dining room. Others have specific routines to increase their personal care skills and dressing unaided. The thoughtfulness in approach to supporting young people has become a significant strength of the home. Of particular note is a young person who has a set of dental tools that staff show him and allow him to touch in order to prepare him for his	

next dental examination, which had previously caused him distress.

Young people's physical and emotional health are supported well by the home. There is close liaison with a paediatric nurse who visits the service regularly. The home enables and supports parents to access specific appointments, such as assessment for new wheelchairs and other essential mobility equipment. Staff have training in managing specific medical conditions and health procedures, such as epilepsy management and gastrostomy feeds. There is also close liaison with child and adolescent mental health services to review young people's emotional well-being and the strategies used in the home. A new, larger medication storage and administration room has been developed, allowing for easier processing of the large quantity of medication. Staff wear a tabard while administering medication to ensure that they are not disturbed, which helps to reduce the risk of errors. When there are errors, they are thoroughly investigated by the home's manager and reported to appropriate agencies and professionals. There was an issue noted at inspection that a newly admitted young person's records did not show how he likes to take his medication, which caused some confusion for staff.

Transitions into the home are well structured and allow the young person to move in or access the short-break service at their own pace. There has been an emergency placement in the home, which was known to be outside of the statement of purpose's identified range of needs. The responsible individual and manager worked effectively with staff from another home in the organisation to provide staff with the skills and experience to meet his needs, while a permanent placement was sought. While it was an extremely challenging and distressing time for the young person, other young people were not affected as he remained in a separate area of the home used as a flat for a former resident.

Young people are treated with dignity and respect, and are able to express themselves and their views. They are supported to attend religious observance if they would like to, and they learn about the cultures and faiths of others. Young people are treated as individuals, and increasingly do not have to be part of the group all of the time if they do not wish to. Young people's plans are clear and have been developed to be more detailed and much less generic. For example, they now have protocols showing how to support young people who like to 'post' items out of their bedroom windows, including providing boxes to catch their items, so they do not break. There is still some way to go in this area, and the manager is keen to continually upskill staff into preparing individualised and thoughtful plans. An area of practice that needs to change immediately is staff leaving young people's support plans, which they are referring to, in the corridor, because this is compromising the confidentiality of young people's personal information.

Young people have contact with family as agreed in their plans, and the home is proactive in ensuring that this is a positive experience. Examples include relocating the contact to within the home, to reduce distress and ensure that staff are available to support if needed. One young person has had her contact significantly

increased over time through the joint working and supportive approach from staff to her parents. One parent commented that it is a pleasurable experience visiting her son in the home, and staff always make her feel welcome.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
Young people's actions and demeanour show that they feel safe in the home and they approach staff confidently. Staff have an excellent understanding of each young person's vulnerabilities and do all they can to protect them. Incidents are reported to children's services or to the local authority designated officer as required. Responses to any incidents are robust, and have included suspension of staff while investigations take place. Lessons are learned from investigations and practice adapted to reduce the risk of harm to children in the future. For example, the front gate is now locked to prevent egress onto the main road following an incident. Staff have a strong understanding of child protection and safeguarding, and take seriously their role in identifying any risk that a young person may be at. While it is unlikely that young people will come to harm in the community as they are always supervised by staff, they recognise the risks others could pose, including from the young people to each other. Plans are clear with regards to personal and intimate care in order to protect young people. One young person has been missing from the home while on a temporary emergency placement. Staff responded appropriately, remaining in sight of the young person at all times, and contacting the police. This was a particularly unusual situation for staff in this home, which was managed effectively. Young people are able to enjoy activities in line with their age and understanding. The practice remains largely risk averse, but the new manager is challenging staff in this area, and allowing young people to try new experiences in a controlled manner. Staff work effectively as a team to promote positive behaviour. There has been a particular drive in this area, with staff now working in teams in designated areas, therefore supporting fewer young people and gaining a better understanding of their needs. This also ensures that young people experience fewer direct carers, which helps them gain trust in staff. Sanctions are not used, and young people are typically redirected to other activities or areas of the home to de-escalate their anxiety or divert unwanted behaviours. Restraint is only used when absolutely all other options have been exhausted. An area for development is gaining young	

people's views in a communication style that meets their needs after an incident or restraint.

Staff recruitment is mostly robust and follows safer recruitment practice. However, there are gaps in some staff files held within the home, including verification of gaps in employment, and one file had no references, although it was unclear whether this was because they had become detached from the file inspected, or not obtained.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good
The registered manager has been away from the home on an organisational project since July 2016. A registered manager from within this organisation, with a proven track record, has been overseeing the home. It has been agreed that this will remain a permanent arrangement, and the manager is currently in the process of registering with Ofsted. She has made significant changes to practice and processes within the home. Additionally, the service manager for the children with disabilities team has become the registered individual, promoting more joint working and cross-team thinking to meet the needs of young people in the home effectively. The home has adequate staff to meet the needs of young people, many of whom have been in post for a number of years. They are enthusiastic about their work with young people, and feel that they are mostly well supported by the senior team and managers. The manager has restructured the senior team to provide greater consistency and access to senior staff. Additionally, there have been changes to the deployment of part-time staff to ensure that they have greater contact with young people. This has inevitably led to some uncertainty in the team and some staff feeling unsettled. The majority of staff have welcomed the changes and recognise the benefit to young people. Staff experience regular, challenging supervision and appraisals are currently taking place. The quality of care within the home and short-break service is actively monitored through the manager's monthly checks and six-monthly evaluations in line with regulation 45. The independent visitor has recently changed, and the manager feels that they are providing a fresh perspective on the strengths and areas for development within the home. The development plan is regularly updated and reviewed, as the new manager is making sweeping changes across the home and service. Young people's care plans are being developed to ensure that they are more	

focused on the young person and their goals and targets. The management team regularly reviews these with key workers, parents and carers to ensure that they remain relevant. There is strong joint working with partner agencies to further ensure quality care for young people.

Staff have access to various training opportunities in line with their roles and the needs of young people. External professionals, such as the nurse, liaise with staff and ensure that they are confident in delegated tasks, in addition to meeting with education staff to ensure that communication techniques are consistently applied. Mandatory training is provided by the organisation, and staff who have not completed their level 3 qualifications are being actively supported to do this, while new staff are being enrolled onto this course, which will start in the coming weeks.

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 that 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 whom 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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