

Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	02/12/2015
Unique reference number	SC361789
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered person	Cornwall Council
Registered person address	County Hall, TRURO, Cornwall, TR1 3AY

Responsible individual	Katherine Brown
Registered manager	Julie Walsh
Inspector	Janice Hawtin

Inspection date	01/12/2015
Previous inspection judgement	Improved effectiveness
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home	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

SC361789

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is outstanding because:

- The staff team's dedication and unwavering resolve to provide the best possible service to young people is informed by research, training and through consultation with specialist agencies and parents. Work with parents is helping them to understand young people's behaviour and re-build attachments. Alongside many other aspects of staff practice, this work is worthy of dissemination to other care settings.
- The staff team is mindful of the complex needs of young people. The staff's ability to understand and make sense of young people's behaviour is key to communicating effectively with them. Consequently, young people's anxiety is reduced, helping them feel safe. The high standard of care provided enables young people to make social, emotional and practical progress where and when possible.
- Stakeholders are overwhelmingly full of praise about the service. Comments include a teacher saying, 'You can't fault the dedication. They support communication, and we get a quick response to any crisis situation. I always feel welcome in this home. They support young people really well'. Parents made comments such as, 'We are very, very pleased with how things are going, this place has been the making of him', and, 'The staff do a fantastic job, I feel fully involved and my son has learned a lot of self-help skills'.
- The staff group is led by a highly knowledgeable and effective senior management team. This includes an experienced and qualified registered manager. The team works together exceptionally well. All staff feel listened to and participate in the planning of care and service developments. Skills and strengths of both the service as a whole and individuals are well known and utilised to make the most of the resources available. Practice is constantly developing and improving to benefit young people. A detailed development plan is in place which the staff use to drive improvements.
- Valuable support for staff includes specialist training, team meetings and appraisal. This ensures they are equipped to do their job well. All staff speak enthusiastically about young people and take pride in their achievements.

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

Recommendations

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

- Ensure that the environment is consistent with a domestic setting and homely throughout. (The Guide to the Quality Standards Page 15 paragraph 3.9)

Full report

Information about this children's home

The home is registered to provide for up to 9 children and children young people with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties and learning difficulties.

The home is owned by a Local Authority.

It is situated in close proximity to a school for children and young people with additional needs and a children's home offering short breaks.

Some facilities and resources are shared between the three services.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
25/02/2015	CH – Interim	improved effectiveness
12/08/2014	CH – Full	Good
21/01/2014	CH – Interim	Good Progress
20/06/2013	CH – Full	Good

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home	Outstanding
Young people make significant social and emotional progress in this home; their needs and unique circumstances are understood and valued by the staff team. Staff feel strongly that young people need and deserve to feel loved. Interactions from the staff towards young people are thoughtful and understanding. They have a genuine affection for those in their care and observable attachments exist between staff and young people. 'Whatever it takes' is the commendable attitude of the staff team; nothing is too much trouble or too difficult when it comes to supporting young people. The staff team understands the importance of family relationships. Staff work closely with parents and relatives. This close working relationship includes facilitating and providing support so that parents can go on holiday with their	

children. A parent described a holiday as 'a really special time', adding, 'I can't thank the staff enough'.

The staff's attention to the needs of young people and their determination to make a difference is exceptional. Understanding young people and interpreting their behaviour is central to the care that staff provide. This involves listening to them very carefully and interpreting young people's often subtle and diverse methods of communication. The skills of the staff team in understanding and dealing with autism allows them to help young people reduce the anxiety they experience in trying to make sense of and feel safe in world around them. Young people are encouraged to develop their ability to make choices and to gain independence skills. Many do special things for the first time in this home like saying someone's name, making a choice, using the toilet or even just sitting in a different seat than usual.

Staff recognise and celebrate what may seem like the smallest of achievements. It is clear they take a pride in young people and could talk enthusiastically about their attainments and progress all day.

Thorough care planning, completed in partnership with parents and other agencies (including specialist mental health services), supports young people's emotional well-being and personal development. Staff respond effectively when young people find changes in routine very difficult (such as during school holidays). Staff plan in advance and maintain some of the daily structure to avoid young people becoming distressed.

Where increased anxiety is inevitable for young people who struggle with change, the staff reduce other pressures such as development targets. Care focuses on staff delivery rather than challenging or placing new expectations on young people. This avoids regression from progress already made.

Young people make good use of community facilities to enhance their experiences. A favourite activity is swimming. Young people also recently took part in a community torchlight carnival parade. Activity planning is unique for each young person taking into account their likes and dislikes as well as their development needs. A young person who is noise averse is gradually being exposed to social situations. Staff who know the young person well offer constant reassurance and also understand tolerance levels and take action to avoid the young person becoming distressed when noise is perhaps getting too much.

All young people attend school full time. Communication and planning between the home and the school contributes to maximizing young people's developments.

Joint meetings to discuss progress or deal with any concerns are common practice. The care staff also produce regular written updates which include photographic evidence of young people's achievements and activities. A teacher commented, 'These reports are particularly helpful in keeping us updated following school holidays'. Copies of reports are sent to other professional stakeholders and parents so that everyone knows what has been going on and can see the difference the staff are making to young people's lives.

Staff understand the significance of preserving and keeping memorabilia for young people. They are also intent on making information meaningful for young people. The four young people in this home each have their own life story work and family photographs presented in a unique way. One has vinyl photos on a textured onesie to meet his sensory needs, another on CD discs. Young people also have published photo books. Staff are trialling year books as part of keeping evidence of young people's history and their time in the home.

Where possible, transitions to and from the home are carefully considered. They are planned well in advance and support for young people moving on from the home continues as long as necessary. Social stories, pictures and symbols are often used to help young people understand change.

Careful consideration and risk assessment supports the occasional placement of other young people in emergency and/or crisis situations. Additional staffing is available if necessary to avoid any impact on current residents. Planning meetings are within the acceptable time scales for those placed in an emergency and, where necessary, alternative placements are secured quickly.

Staff have additional training in, and are knowledgeable about child development. They understand the complexities of helping young people with complex needs to understand the changes brought about by puberty and their developing sexuality. Staff do not shy away from these issues and seek specialist support, guidance, and resources to help young people understand their bodies as a natural part of growing up.

Upgrading the home is work in progress and some communal areas such as the kitchen and a toilet require attention to make them consistent with a domestic setting. Otherwise, the staff team has worked hard to make the rest of the environment more homely and cosy. Significant improvements are evident including the refurbishment of two bathrooms and redecoration and refurbishment of the two lounges. Young people's bedrooms have been decorated and are personalised.

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	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
All the young people living in this home have complex learning difficulties including autism; as such, they will require lifelong support. Behaviour management focuses on the staff's understanding of young people's disabilities, attachment difficulties, previous trauma and the anxiety they face from trying to make sense of the world around them. Relationships between staff and young people are attentive and caring as well as playful when appropriate. Staff are trained in attachment and child development. Their interactions, including any requests they have of young people, are carefully considered. Staff understand how important it is for young people to trust and be able to predict the responses of the staff around them. Young people feel safe and secure. This is a significant factor which contributes to young people's progression and development. Independent monitoring of the home alongside regular visits from specialist professionals and family members contributes to assuring the quality of care provided and keeping young people safe. An independent advocate is also available to visit and support young people. Staff are skilled in being able to pick up on the subtlest of communications from young people. These skills enable staff to respond quickly to a young person's needs and avoid them becoming agitated or anxious. Staff support and reassure young people when encouraging them to develop coping strategies. This promotes safer alternatives to difficult or aggressive behaviour when young people find situations difficult. Major achievements for young people can be something as simple as being able to sit down in an alternative seat where their usual seat is occupied, or being able to sit down next to another young person for the first time. The staff team meet on a regular basis to discuss behaviour management and how to reduce anxiety for young people. Specialist professionals are included in many	

of these meetings to offer guidance, support, and quality assurance of work practice. A clinical psychologist described the team as 'reflective and thoughtful, always interested in knowing about new things which may help young people'.

Thorough risk assessments, individualised for each young person, inform practice and contribute to keeping young people safe. Staff are creative in finding solutions to unsafe behaviour. For example, they have identified times when a young person is susceptible to putting small objects in his mouth. During these times, he is offered safe alternatives such as chewing gum which meets the sensory need he seeks.

Physical intervention is rarely used to manage behaviour. A principal social worker commented, 'I'm impressed they don't use physical intervention especially with four very challenging young people; behaviour never seems to escalate. I couldn't wish for things to go better'.

The main entrance to the home is kept locked and all visitors must have a valid reason and suitable checks in place before they can have any access to young people. Young people lack sufficient understanding of danger to be allowed out of the home without some adult supervision. This is limited as much as possible depending on the risks involved. One young person goes out into a large playground nearby where he can be seen from the home.

Young people rarely go missing from this home and no incidents have been recorded since the previous inspection.

Staff have up to date training in how to safeguard the welfare of young people. Staff are clear about what to do should any concerns about young people arise. Homes across this local authority have benefitted from recent additional guidance.

The manager has dealt swiftly with a medication error, providing additional training and support for staff. Medication is dispensed by two staff to avoid mistakes. It is also independently audited by a community disability nurse as an additional safeguard. Health and safety checks are kept up to date and regularly reviewed to avoid young people being exposed to unnecessary risks.

	Judgement grade
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The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Outstanding
The registered manager has more than 15 years' experience of supporting young people with additional needs including dealing with challenging behaviour, autism and disability. She has care, leadership and management qualifications, and professional certification in coaching and mentoring, risk assessment and supervision. Her role is supported by a deputy manager and senior residential care worker. Together, they lead, support and develop a team which achieves exceptional results in understanding and developing the young people living in this home. Several methods of keeping up to date with the latest practice developments are used to improve practice and benefit young people. These methods include training, networking, attending events provided by special agencies, attention to research publications, and changes in legislation. The staff team works in partnership with other agencies. The home is regularly visited by specialist professionals from both health and education services. This includes professionals who work with staff to understand and improve the emotional and mental health of young people such as those from Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). The manager is not afraid to challenge other services to secure the necessary help for young people where these services fall below the high standards expected for young people. Recent challenges have been made to try and secure specialist dental services for young people, and to deal with some dispensing problems at a local pharmacy. All staff receive essential and specialist training including the one agency worker who covers shifts in the home. All staff have reflective supervision which helps them to consider and action personal development needs. The manager and deputy undertake both announced and unannounced observation of staff practice as a monitoring tool and development opportunity for the staff. Staff feel valued and supported in their role They described the managers as 'knowledgeable', adding, 'This is more than a job to them, they do direct work with the young people and we can contact them any time'. Staff have allocated responsibilities and dedicated roles within the team to make best use of their skills. One member of staff is responsible for organising memorabilia for young people, another focuses on activities and providing information to improve young people's opportunities to make meaningful activity choices. A member of staff has just	

secured funding to undertake Video Interactive Guidance (VIG) training. Amongst many professional uses, VIG enables staff to reflect on their interactions with clients and determine what works best. It has been used previously in this home with great success in helping foster carers understand the behaviour of a young person prior to accepting him into their home.

The strengths and weakness of the home are understood by all staff. A development plan is in place; it is reviewed and updated on a regular basis to enable continuous practice development.

The Statement of Purpose provides accurate detail about the home, the staff and ways of working. Young people's guides are available in several formats to meet a variety of communication needs.

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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