

Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	02/12/2015
Unique reference number	SC372511
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered person	Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council
Registered person address	Blackburn With Darwen Borough Council, Town Hall, King William Street, BLACKBURN, BB1 7DY

Responsible individual	Karen Barrick
Registered manager	Jeremy Wood
Inspector	Ceri Evans

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 are	Outstanding
The children's home provides highly effective services that consistently exceeds 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	Outstanding
the impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Outstanding

SC372511

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is outstanding because:

- Young people and their families benefit immensely from the support provided by this service. Parents and carers are extremely positive about the home and are happy with the quality of care and support their children receive.
- Young people stay in a welcoming and supportive home where they are fully valued and respected. Staff are extremely creative and highly successful in gaining the views of young people who have complex needs.
- A strong feature of the home is the warm and affectionate relationships between staff and young people. Vulnerable and complex young people appear happy, relaxed and comfortable during their stay.
- Staff ensure that young people are given every opportunity to experience activities that may not otherwise be available to them. They are extremely dedicated to their role and show great commitment to ensuring vulnerable young people are enabled to live life to the full.
- The team are skilled at balancing and encouraging appropriate levels of engagement. Detailed risk assessments and behaviour management plans support young people to safely engage in community activities, which develop their social skills and confidence.
- Staff are highly effective in managing young people's complex and challenging behaviour. They are consistent in their response to negative behaviour and have been successful in their efforts to help young people manage their frustrations and anxieties, which are often brought about by their disability.
- The home has strong and robust partnerships with other professionals. The service has created an integrated service called the 'hub' which forms part of the Children's Disability service. This ensures a coordinated approach to supporting young people and their families.
- Leaders and managers are able to communicate their vision to provide a progressive service; involving stakeholders appropriately in development plans for the home. The manager is aspirational and provides clear direction and support to the team.
- Managers have a thorough understanding of the home's strengths and weaknesses. Shortfalls are quickly identified and swift action is taken to address these.

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):

- All staff must have their performance and fitness to carry out their role formally appraised at least once annually. This appraisal should take into account, where reasonable and practical, the views of other professionals who have worked with the staff member over the year and children in the home's care. (The Guide, page 61, 13.5)
- All children's case records must be kept up-to-date. This specifically relates to ensuring that cross referenced information on support and health plans are accurate and up to date. (The Guide, page 62, 14.3)

Full report

Information about this children's home

This children's home is owned and run by a local authority. The home provides short break accommodation for young people with learning/physical disabilities and complex health needs. The service has two main functions. The home can accommodate up to four young people on a short break. It is also able to provide accommodation in emergency situations, such as a placement breakdown. Currently, 44 young people access the service.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
24/03/2015	CH - Interim	improved effectiveness
15/10/2014	CH - Full	Outstanding
28/02/2014	CH - Interim	Good Progress
17/10/2013	CH - Full	Good

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	outstanding
Young people are making excellent progress as a result of their short break at this home. They look forward to coming and thoroughly enjoy their stay. Parents are exceptionally positive about the service, comments include: 'As a single parent I don't think I'd still be standing without the support of Appletrees. I trust staff completely and my child enjoys going. I have seen that staff are very affectionate and nurturing and I know that my child has picked up this warm and caring atmosphere.' Professionals are equally positive, one social worker stated: 'I would not hesitate to recommend this service. Parents I work with express satisfaction and are extremely complimentary about Appletrees.' A strong feature of the home is the warm and affectionate relationships between staff and young people. Staff are particular skilled in observing and understanding the complex needs and vulnerabilities of young people. They have an excellent understanding of each young person's tolerance levels and are skilled at recognising potentially stressful situations. They make good use of the resources available to them; such as the sensory room, toys and activities to lessen anxieties. As a result young people trust that staff are responsive to their needs which helps them manage internal and external stress factors. Staff place young people's wellbeing at the centre of their practice. Plans are comprehensive and are consistent with the local authority care plans. However, some of the support plans are not appropriately cross referenced with information within young people's health files. This is an administrative error and has not impacted negatively on the wellbeing of young people. That said, the manager has acknowledged the shortfall and is in the process of ensuring that both records are clear and up to date. Staff spoken with during the inspection demonstrated an in-depth knowledge of young people's plans; this ensures good quality care in accordance with individual needs. Staff consult with families and placing social workers to gain a comprehensive understanding of their complex needs. The team are creative and resourceful in supporting young people's communication and language. They are particular skilled at interpreting signs and behaviours and respond to them appropriately. They use a range of methods to communicate and make good use of sensory toys, music, sign language and pictures to help young people make purposeful choices. One staff member commented: 'the staff are very supportive and children are treated with dignity, respect and treated as individuals. We listen to them and always make sure we offer choices.'	

Staff effectively challenge barriers to the participation of children and young people with disabilities in activities. They are effective advocates and promote the rights of young people to express their views and make choices about their lives. Staff have consistently high aspirations for young people irrespective of the complexity of their needs. Staff have a 'can do' and inclusive approach to care. Young people have access to a wide range of opportunities to explore the world, build confidence and social skills. They have participated in a wide range of activities including zip wiring, rock climbing, barge trips and home based activities such as music, film, arts and crafts. These experiences are captured in photographs and are proudly displayed around the home. Records show that the young people have a great deal of enjoyment through these stimulating activities.

Staff have good understanding of young people's specific health needs. They work in partnership with young people's families who retain primary responsibility for the health of their children. Parents are encouraged to complete an information sharing booklet prior to every visit. This ensures that staff are up to date and fully conversant with young people's current health needs. Young people are well supported to access healthcare services that may be required as a result of an illness or accident. Immediate action is taken by staff to ensure emerging health needs are consistently met.

Recent improvements have been made to the administration and safe handling of medication. For example, the home now has a separate medication room and the homes procedures have been updated to prevent errors in the medication regime. Records are checked daily and medication stock is audited by a named individual. Consequently, any discrepancies are identified and rectified immediately.

It is difficult for young people to make complaints in their own right because of the nature of their disability. Complaints are rare; however parents are aware of the complaints procedure and are confident that any issues will be dealt with professionally and in a timely manner. Complaints records are clear and provide a thorough overview of the action taken and any lessons learned. Parents spoken with during the inspection expressed no concerns and stated that they are confident that the manager would deal with any issues should they arise.

The environment is a homely, safe and a stimulating place where young people can maximise their potential. The premises are well designed and fully equipped to meet the full range of mobility needs. Staff make every effort to ensure that young people can stay in the same room for each visit. The home is personalised with lots of art work, photographs and records of achievement. This helps young people to settle in and feel at home. One parent commented: 'Appletrees is like a home from home, my child absolutely loves going.'

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	outstanding
Young people are protected from harm. Parents and professionals confirm that they have every confidence in home's ability to keep young people safe during their stay. Staff are well supported and receive effective training. They fully understand young people's needs and are confident in delivering highly personalised care. High staffing ratios ensure close support, supervision and monitoring of young people. Young people's strengths, vulnerabilities and triggers are highlighted within detailed plans and risk assessments. These plans are understood by the staff team who implement them in their daily practice. Risk assessments are reviewed and updated and information is shared and reviewed with parents, health and education staff, and social workers. This ensures young people's holistic needs are fully met. Staff are highly effective in managing young people's complex and challenging behaviour. They are consistent in their responses to negative behaviour and have been successful in their efforts to help young people manage their frustrations and anxieties, which are often brought about by their disability. Staff have a very good understating of the times and factors that contribute to young people becoming upset. Staff have worked closely with schools and parents to develop consistent and well thought out behaviour management strategies. These strategies are fully implemented in practice and have proved effective in reducing young people's distress. None of the young people accessing the service are known to be subject to the risk of sexual exploitation. That said, the risk is clearly understood by staff. They have all received training on this issue and are highly alert to the signs and triggers. Furthermore, proactive project work has been undertaken with young people and some recently attended a digital workshop. This was arranged to help raise awareness about how to keep safe online. This further demonstrates that staff give young people's safety and protection optimum priority. Young people's safety is strengthened by exceptional partnerships with other professionals. The home forms part of an integrated service called the 'hub'. The hub provides a range of support which includes outreach work, a parents group, youth groups and a joint service delivery with social workers, and health and education staff. These links enable professionals to take decisive and immediate action to protect young people should any issues of concern arise. There are well established and effective arrangements in place for recruiting staff. All staff have been appropriately checked and vetted. Young people have also been	

involved in the selection process and took part in the decision making and their views were taken seriously by the manager. Visitors are also required to provide proof of identity and sign in upon arrival. They are appropriately supervised throughout the duration of their visit. This ensures that young people are not unnecessarily exposed to persons who may pose a risk to them.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	outstanding
Young people benefit from living in an effectively managed home. The manager has been in post since March 2015 and is registered with Ofsted. He has the relevant management qualifications to undertake the role and has worked in social care for many years. He is enthusiastic, committed and a passionate leader who places the welfare and safety of young people at the heart of his practice. Excellent leadership and management ensures the team are well trained and motivated to drive the service forward and achieve improved outcomes for young people. The home is consistently managed and is successful in meeting the aims and objectives highlighted in the Statement of Purpose. Evidence gathered at this inspection highlights that staff practice is rooted in the belief that young people have the right to be treated as individuals and feel safe and secure when spending time away from home. The team are highly skilled at implementing this ethos and place young people are at the centre of all that staff do. Staff regularly receive quality supervision that effectively develops their professional practice. They confirm they are well supported in their practice and given clear direction and guidance. There are excellent opportunities for staff to develop their knowledge and skills through training as well as more specific needs such as moving and handling, visual voice communication, suction training and behaviour management. This ensures that young people are cared for by competent staff who have the right skills and knowledge. Appraisals on staff performance are undertaken annually by the manager. These records demonstrate that professional development and competency is a key focus throughout. However, appraisals do not take into account the views of families and professionals and, where practical, the views of young people. This is a missed opportunity to undertake a more holistic review of professional practice and would aid the manager in identifying development needs within the team.	

Professionals are consistently positive about the home's effectiveness. They confirm that staff work as part of a team which contributes to a more holistic approach to supporting young people with disabilities. One professional stated: 'we have a positive level of engagement with [the home]. Communication is very good and we have very open and honest dialogue with each other. If we could do something better we talk about it, look at what could be done differently and learn from it. Staff are very good at keeping us informed.'

A range of quality assurance monitoring tools is effectively used to ensure shortfalls are identified and addressed in a timely manner. This involved gathering the views of young people, their families and professionals to shape the future operation of the service. There is a clear focus on continuous improvement and development and young people's needs are an integral part of this.

The home maintains records of excellent quality that capture each child's life vividly and in detail. Information is shared appropriately with parents and social workers and this ensures all parties have an understanding of the young person's progress and experiences within the home. Highly effective partnership working within the home underpins the excellent progress young people are making.

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*.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance *raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted*, which is available from Ofsted's website: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, workbased learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It inspects services for looked after children and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2015