

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	06/09/2016
Unique reference number	SC407929
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered provider	Our Place (2008) Limited
Responsible individual	David French
Registered manager	Lena Greatwich
Inspector	Christy Wannop

Inspection date	06/09/2016
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	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

SC407929

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- This service is continually developing, learning and consolidating progress for children. Effective leaders and managers shape the service to the children's needs.
- Staff are enthusiastic about developments and have confidence in leadership. The staff team, including managers and visiting consultants, has a wealth of knowledge, patience, enthusiasm and experience that benefits children. A new training scheme is increasingly able to develop staff with the right skills for the children that they care for.
- Parents, professionals and children are very positive about their experience. Partnership working at all levels is a strength.
- Good-quality assessments and planning at all points of the child's journey, lead to good-quality experiences for children.
- Systems to track children's progress through 'team around the child' meetings are very well developed. The service also uses data to establish patterns and trends and inform action plans. The team is clear about where a child needs to be and how they will get them there.
- The service is well resourced, including a strengthened multi-disciplinary team of consultant therapists who can help children when they need it, without delay. Each child has one-to-one attention from a named staff member.
- Children enjoy the space in the grounds and the increased space in the new children's lounge and dining room.
- There is a real sense of a service that is building on its strengths and has the capability to address any weaknesses effectively. This is a service that is developing in quality and also in size. The registered person is planning to expand the children's home to 10 places and is currently building two new bedrooms. Further plans are afoot to build a home for young adults in the grounds.
- There are some areas for improvement. These relate to strengthening evidence of safer recruitment for external consultants, firming up e-safety policy documentation and improving registered manager scrutiny of records of physical intervention and free access to play equipment.

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
The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety. The requirements are that full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the individual in respect of each of the matters in Schedule 2. (Regulation 32 (1) (3)(d))	01/11/2016

Recommendations

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

- Give children access to a computer and the internet to support their education and learning, unless there are specific safeguarding reasons why this would be inappropriate. In such cases, the home should consider whether and how it can support the child to access a computer and the internet safely. For example, develop e-safety policies and procedures appropriate for the age and understanding of the children and young people, contributed to by the whole setting and updated regularly. Policies should provide advice and guidance that reflect how technology is used at the setting and may include specific references to key areas, for example, digital video and images, data and personal devices. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 23, paragraph 5.19)
- Ensure that all incidents of control, discipline and restraint are subject to systems of regular scrutiny to ensure that their use is fair and the above principles as set out in paragraph 9.35 are respected. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 46, paragraph 9.36)
- Ensure that appropriate opportunities are available for each child to have fun. Specifically, provide more indoor resources for children to use independently in communal areas that will enrich their daily lives. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 31, paragraph 6.10)
- Ensure that everyone working at the home understands their roles and responsibilities and what they are authorised to decide on their own initiative. There should be clear lines of accountability. For example, consider establishing a clear policy for employment of family members, or

those with close personal relationships, that addresses potential compromise, or conflicts of interest. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 54, paragraph 10.20)

Full report

Information about this children's home

This children's home is operated by a small private company and is registered to provide care for eight young people with learning disabilities. Young people may stay until they reach 19 years old. The registered person operates a small registered school for eight young people in a separate building in the grounds.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
27/01/2016	Interim	Improved effectiveness
09/07/2015	Full	Requires improvement
17/02/2015	Interim	Improved effectiveness
02/10/2014	Full	Adequate

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
This is a flexible, creative residential service for children with learning disabilities, complex needs and acquired brain injury. A continual cycle of planning, assessment and monitoring of children's outcomes means that the service is able to identify barriers or challenges. The team uses a multi-disciplinary approach to solving problems before they affect children. Children do make progress and the staff team is tenacious in their efforts to adapt care when children need more or different strategies. Systems for mapping progress are clearly able to show the large and small steps that children take. Newsletters show, in colourful, lively monthly summaries, what children have been doing, what they have achieved, progress and setbacks. A placing social worker said these 'really help to tell the story' of a child's month. Relationships are very good. A parent said of her child and his carers, 'Staff work brilliantly with him. [He is] very attached to them and they are also attached to him.' Children have a range of older and younger, male and female staff. Clear care and behavioural plans help to build staff confidence in how they approach and respond to children: this leads to consistency for children. Newly introduced key working sessions have begun to show real benefits, in drawing out the child's experience and perspective on their life. This makes sure that they are involved in the plans for their care. Records illustrate staff respect for the children. The parent of a young person said, 'He is very happy there.' A real strength of the service is the therapeutic support for children. The team reviews all children regularly at newly convened 'team around the child' meetings. This now includes psychology, speech and language therapy and occupational therapy, as well as independent children's advocacy and behavioural specialisms. The team works with children directly, doing specialist assessments and providing input with staff. This means that children do not wait for the resource they need. If they need it, the registered person provides it. Healthcare is increasingly well managed and a consultant nurse provides training and extra guidance to staff about children's more complex health needs, such as epilepsy. Creative cooking by resourceful chefs means that children's individual dietary needs are well catered for. The chef 'hides' nutritious vegetables in delicious chocolate cakes. Educational satisfaction is high. Staff stay with children through their school day in the classroom. The manager tracks attendance and it is very good. One child said that he had never been so well educated, he felt that staff helped him to behave and to learn! A placing social worker said that a teacher at the school had really	

made a difference for another boy, 'skilled at tapping into his learning potential and empowering his life skills.'

The staff team has worked really well to extend children's life outside the home, with enriching individual leisure opportunities. A placing social work said of her young person, 'He is given choices and his interests are keenly followed up.' A regular driver is specifically employed to facilitate this. Staff have noticed one child's interest in architecture, so trips now include visits to local buildings of significance. Staff also want to increase opportunities for constructive free play in communal lounges. Staff prepare constructive play activities for after school, but the communal areas are not well equipped with toys and resources that children can freely access. The registered manager has not consulted with the consultant play therapist or occupational therapist about this.

Children receive good, thoughtful support to move in and also when they move on to their next home. Staff think early on about the child's next destination and draw up good plans for practical transitions from one home to another. This means that children experience as little unnecessary anxiety as is possible to predict. They plan to offer care for one young person, now an adult, who has returned to their care after an unsuccessful transition to an adult care home. A parent reported how well her child had been able to contribute to his plan for transition and being able to speak for the first time about what he wants, 'It's taken time, he has consistency now.'

Parents who live close by, or at a distance, are welcomed at the home. Staff have been on family holidays to help with children. Children use laptops to make electronic face-to-face contact with their families. This good care keeps children embedded in their lives back home. Staff go the extra mile. A placing social worker commented, 'I feel that there is real care and concern about the well-being of each individual and a desire to ensure that they make progress in a way that the individual can manage.'

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
Good-quality training, policy and procedure all help to inform robust safeguarding practice. The local safeguarding officer reports good dialogue with him and that any issues are 'dealt with in a timely and professional way'. Staff are highly alert to children's vulnerabilities to others, and occasionally to each other. They plan to reduce opportunities for conflict in the environment and ensure that one-to-one staffing and an active day keeps children active and in good spirits. Children do not go out alone and no one has gone missing or been at risk of exploitation. Policy and procedure and good links with specialist local police officers mean that staff, and the local police, are ready for this event. Exit doors are not locked, but the grounds are secure and safe.	

Children are always in sight of the named staff working with them. Some children have wanted to run off by themselves in heated moments. Staff have now negotiated safe ways for them to do this. Staff plan to create a personalised 'retreat', tailored for one young person in the grounds. He is currently deciding whether this should be a yurt, a tent or some other safe structure.

A placing social worker commented on staff's good protective work with one young man, 'They understand his support needs and recognise well his vulnerabilities.' Parents spoke of how well staff understand and work to reduce anxious or angry behaviour and how they do this without over medicating, 'Since he went there, his medication has been reduced dramatically. They looked at what triggered his behaviour and worked with that.' Occasional physical intervention is generally carried out properly and only by fully trained staff, as a last resort. It is not always clear that in managerial 'sign off' of incidents, that the registered manager is aware of occasions when staff have intervened to keep a child safe using an emergency hold, rather than one of the home's approved techniques. There is no indication that intervention was not necessary, but this rare event has bypassed the manager.

There are some aspects for improvement. Recruitment records for consultants do not contain full information or evidence a thorough process to ensure suitability. Children use Wi-Fi on electronic tablets and readers. Staff make sure that they do this safely, through regular checks on the sites that they access and constant supervision. However, the e-safety policy and detail in children's plans and risk management documents are not good enough. The current policy is vague and insufficiently specific to guide staff.

Regular checks and good precautions make sure that the environment, activities and appliances are safe for adults and children alike. Building work continues in the grounds. Children and staff are all very familiar with safety precautions. Children's individualised escape plans are regularly practised so fire safety has a high priority.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good
The registered manager has been in post since June 2013, is well qualified and very experienced in management and also in working with children with disabilities. The registered manager, and her deputy, the care manager, lead the staff team well. A new headteacher has been appointed to make up the senior leadership team. They inspire, support and challenge staff in equal measure. Effective internal and external monitoring is complemented by the regular input of an active, independent child advocate. A cycle of planning, monitoring and review means that the registered person is clear about strengths and weaknesses of the service and develops plans for improvement. Use of data and helpful analysis gives a picture of children's developments, their anxiety and behavioural challenges, that	

is easily shared with parents and placing authorities.

Consultation with children, parents and placing authorities is well established now, though is not reflected in the formal report of the review of the quality of care. Two professionals have commented about improvements: they would like to see more active sight of communication aids in use and for there to be no gaps in key worker arrangements. However, this was part of an overall very positive view of the service.

Managers have taken action to meet the two previous recommendations from the last inspection. Children's behavioural strategies and the home's policy for behaviour are now consistently understood and implemented by all. The children's monthly summaries are now excellent documents, which do contain all information, achievements, setbacks and any safeguarding issues that have arisen.

The registered person deals promptly with complaints and is transparent in investigations and conclusions. They follow up learning from incidents and plan for clear improvement in supervision if any staff performance issues arise. Three staff members are related to each other, including a manager. There is no concern about this from any source. However, there is no policy to cover any potential for conflict of interest to ensure that there is an equality of opportunity.

The home is very well resourced. The grounds and buildings are very well suited to the needs of the children. Each child has one-to-one attention from a named member of staff on each shift. Additional senior residential staff coordinate the work across teams on shift. This new development has led to better consistency of working practice in teams, sharing good practice and enabling immediate attention when things do not go to plan. Staff are either qualified or well on the way to qualification. They have a keen sense of their development and opportunities within the organisation. Staff report careful, slow induction, reflective, challenging supervision and helpful child-specific training from the new training manager. For example, insight from training has helped staff to better understand acquired brain injury and what this means for the child. Staff are energetic, insightful and skilled. They clearly enjoy their work and have close, professional connections with children and their families.

The service is sometimes hampered in its ability to plan for children by placing authorities' reluctance to begin pathway plans on time, or mark major placement changes with a review. The management team challenges this. This proactive leadership approach puts children first. To avoid delay in service through funding negotiations, the registered person has also purchased essential healthcare equipment and been later refunded by health partners.

Placing authorities were all confident in the quality of communication and partnership working with them, and families, by staff and managers. A consultant psychiatrist commented on the quality and consistency of the staff team, 'The staff and carers are able to work well with their clients. They are able to retain staff, who communicate well with all others involved.' A local authority commissioning team was 'very impressed by what they saw, heard and evidenced' during their

visit.

The service has grown and further changes and expansion of the service are planned in two additional children's bedrooms, which are under construction. The registered person is also actively planning to develop accommodation for young people as they move into adulthood. The registered person should ensure that the statement of purpose reflects how children and young adults, of different cognitive ability can continue to thrive together in one home.

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 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 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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