

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	25/07/2016
Unique reference number	SC471581
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered provider address	

Responsible individual	Darren Smallman
Registered manager	Isobel Green
Inspector	Rachel Britten

Inspection date	25/07/2016
Previous inspection judgement	Not judged
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

SC471581

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- The young person has formed a trusting relationship with a highly committed staff team.
- Staff skilfully care for the young person and meet his particular needs that arise from his learning disabilities.
- Staff communicate warmly with the young person, which helps to reduce his anxieties.
- Staff consistently use communication aids, visual cues and routines that help the young person to understand what is happening and this gives him maximum personal control and choice.
- Staff help the young person to choose from a wealth of activities that widen his experiences enormously and significantly improves his emotional and physical well-being.
- The registered person provides additional equipment, including a hot tub and large trampoline, in order to meet the young person's individual needs.
- The young person feels safe, settled and increasingly confident.
- Staff welcome the young person's family and ensure that his wishes and feelings are respected and catered for.
- Staff and managers work very well with social workers, former respite care providers and education professionals. This ensures that the young person's needs are all met well.
- There are a few minor shortfalls in safe practice and care planning.

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 recommendations:

- Continually and actively assess the risks to each child and the arrangements in place to protect them. This is with particular regard to improving the accuracy and helpfulness of the home's risk-assessment document. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 42, paragraph 9.5)
- Ensure that the registered person and their staff engage proactively with the placing authority to contribute fully to the relevant plans for the child's care on an ongoing basis. This is with particular regard to meeting young people's need for bereavement counselling. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 56, paragraph 11.3)

Full report

Information about this children's home

This children's home is operated by a small limited company and can accommodate and provide care for up to two children and young people who have learning disabilities.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
01/03/2016	Interim	Not judged
14/12/2015	Interim	Not judged
23/02/2015	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
01/07/2014	Full	Adequate

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
The young person's care has been extremely well planned from the outset of his placement. He has got to know the staff at a gradual pace over a transitional period of many weeks during May and June 2016. Staff took a genuine interest in him from day one of his introductions. Staff visited him daily at his family home and showed him that they were happy to spend time with him. Staff created 'My Plan' with the young person, using photos and words to make a timetable of daily activities and places to visit that were interesting and relevant to his favourite things. For example, there were many outings involving public transport and to transport museums. The young person kept his plan and referred to what he was doing next and who was coming to see him. Initially, activities were planned alongside family members and/or staff from the respite resource centre where the young person had received some care. The plan progressed gradually and included tea visits, a weekend away and overnight visits to the children's home. The plan said clearly, what he needed help with and how best he likes that help to be provided. Staff purchased a fish tank and fish because the young person likes pets and finds water very soothing. Staff wrote to him, asking him to name and help look after the fish. He did so, and he quickly started to develop relationships with staff and to feel comfortable and secure. He made the decision to move into the home sooner than was originally planned, but he had enjoyed several overnight stays without family members and said: 'I have two bedrooms – one is at my mum's house and one is here.' The young person is here on a single-placement basis. His parent and his social worker say that the reason he is progressing well is that he had time to get used to the idea of living away from home. (This placement followed two failed placements in residential schools.) The young person now plays with his toy train-sets again in his bedroom, which he had stopped doing because he was anxious and unsettled. His mother said: 'They are warm; he is safe and happy; he thrives there. Everything is working really, really well, such as the visual timetables in his own little book.' His social worker said: 'He is much more relaxed: the anxious, repetitive behaviour is stopping. He is drawing, singing and laughing. It is clear that staff reassure him because there are vast improvements in his levels of anxiety and emotional distress.' The young person enjoys many challenging and active age-appropriate activities	

that benefit his physical and emotional health. His difficulties arising from being overweight are being overcome, and his confidence and emotional health are improving at the same time. For example, staff enabled him to enjoy the elevated walkways, climbing and zip wires at the 'Go Ape' adventure facility. Staff regularly take him to climbing walls and for countryside or seaside walks. They plan train journeys to destinations such as railway museums, where they walk around, seeing and investigating the exhibits. Staff give choices between fizzy drinks, ice cream and sweets rather than letting him have too much of all of these things. Instead, they eat fruit and balanced cooked meals, picnics and snacks. The young person is now able to walk over four miles. He often chooses apples for a snack.

The young person feels secure because staff understand his learning disabilities and communicate with him in ways that he understands. Staff speak slowly and in small 'bites'. They make sure that he knows what is happening next. They speak and write words that match his reading age. If he is becoming worried or anxious about things, they show him the 'now and next board' and/or his planner where it says what they are doing and who is looking after him. Staff make sure that the young person can have time to himself, but they also make sure that he knows where they are and what they are doing. Staff keep to the times that they have agreed because this helps him too. For example, when he is using the outdoor hot tub, staff make sure that the young person knows what time he gets changed to go in, what time he can change the settings on the tub, and when it is the time that he has chosen to get out.

The young person lives close to his family home and contact arrangements are flexible. This meets the young person's needs well because he has ongoing and important attachments to his mother and siblings. His visits vary in length and include overnight stays. His mother is very confident that the home meets all his needs. She said: 'I really like the one-to-one setting: from day one, the transition went at his pace, taking into account his emotions. He has surprised us all: he has always wanted to go back there after being with me. I have dropped in a few times unannounced and my other children are welcome at the home too.'

The young person is progressing well with his independence, confidence and emotional resilience. He helps with his own laundry and clearing up his dishes after meals. He is trying new and healthier foods and staff are involving him in shopping and menu planning. He is clearer about what to do and how to do it because staff consistently show him care and communicate with him in ways that he understands. He enjoys the 'well done' cards that he gets from staff and the occasional gift voucher rewards that he can spend in the toy shop. He is more confident now that the place where he goes to school and the place where he lives are two different places. He has received good help to understand how the home works because staff have spent time explaining and revisiting things whenever he needs reminding or more explanation. However, the young person has suffered a significant bereavement and has not had specific help to understand and cope with

this. So far, managers and staff have not considered what they should do to contribute towards planning for meeting this need.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
The young person's behaviour is managed consistently well. He is not showing the anxious behaviours that were seen when he was in residential school. There has been no use of physical intervention since he came to the home and he has never wanted to run away from staff or the home. This progress is because sensitive staff have developed trusting, nurturing relationships with him: he feels safe and no longer believes that he is 'naughty'. His social worker said: 'I really, really, cannot fault the staff: my young man had a really difficult time before coming here but he is trusting adults again, is going at his own pace, and is getting a fantastic service that is not risk averse. He even trusted staff enough to go and do Go Ape.' Staff and the manager show skill, insight and good care in managing the risks that are associated with the young person's learning disabilities and large physical size. For example, staff supervise the young person when he is using the trampoline, but do not go on it at the same time as him. They have assessed that the weight limit would be exceeded and that there would be added dangers of injury and harm if they did. They promote exercise through having fun on the trampoline. Staff have assessed all the risks associated with the hot tub. They complete checks on the water and maintain the tub in accordance with instructions to minimise any risks of contracting legionnaire's disease. They always supervise the young person, but never get in the tub with him. These actions minimise health, drowning and safeguarding risks. Staff assess general risks around the house on the home's risk-assessment document. For example, this document describes the risks associated with the storage of cooking knives and locking of exterior doors. However, the document is not up to date or clear enough. It does not give correct and helpful advice about everything that staff need to do if they are to minimise all risks around the house in ways that suit the specific and current needs of this young person. The young person is confident in talking to any member of staff or to the manager if he is unhappy. Staff are safely recruited and do not work in isolation from one another. They all understand and know how to identify and report safeguarding concerns, including whistle-blowing. Staff are also helping the young person to form a connection with	

the home's independent visitor, who visits monthly. She has only met him once so far, but staff are going to show him a photo of her and explain simply that she comes to check that he is okay. The manager is also sourcing a suitable advocate.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good
The home is one of two small homes in the organisation. It operates in accordance with its statement of purpose. The manager is able to manage well and be in day-to-day charge of both homes because she is exceptionally able and knowledgeable in managing care for young people who have learning disabilities. She is skilled in prioritising the needs of young people and has a clear understanding of the progress the young person has made. In addition, the two homes in the organisation are small and in close proximity to one another. There is also a competent deputy in the role of care coordinator. The manager has been registered at the home for seven months. However, there were no children on roll for almost a year until the young person's referral was accepted and his transition plan begun. The manager has a proven track record in managing the organisation's sister home, where the resident young person is making outstanding progress. The quality of all aspects of the care and management there was graded outstanding at the last full inspection. In this home, the manager has focused very effectively on improving the staff team's skills in readiness for a new admission. She puts great effort into improving her skills in matching young people who have learning disabilities to a small home that is located in a densely residential housing estate. This means that she has met the recommendation made at the last inspection very well. In particular, she has developed effective ways to obtain full and accurate information before accepting referrals. At the same time, she demonstrates enormous warmth, empathy and genuineness in her dealings with parents, and with placing professionals and other providers. She has also worked hard on ensuring the best quality of preparation, and transitions that are tailor made for each young person. These management skills underpin the new young person's early success here. The manager and deputy manager support staff well. This ensures that the young person benefits enormously from staff who consistently demonstrate enthusiasm, care and skill. The manager trains and supervises all staff regularly, including providing the staff team with the monthly services of an independent psychologist. The psychologist provides reflective and supportive sessions about the impact of the young person's learning disabilities on his behaviour and the impact of staff's work on their personal lives. She also helps them to develop ideas for practice.	

The manager has almost completed her level 5 diploma in leadership for health and social care and children and young people's services with the residential management pathway. She is still within the three-year timescale for achieving this qualification. All staff have undertaken training about learning disability to diploma level 2 standard. They are also enrolled on some mental health and autism training, which they say should help them even further. All staff who are undertaking their level 3 diploma in social care for children and young people are within the required timescales to complete this before they have worked in residential social care for two years.

The manager undertakes regular, comprehensive and insightful reviews of the home. She identifies what is important at the time and has not at any time ignored the development of the home, even when there were no children on roll. The manager values and uses feedback from staff and advice from the monthly independent visitor. For example, she has adapted the arrangements for using the upstairs and downstairs staff sleep-in rooms so that each staff member takes a turn sleeping upstairs where they are more affected by the early rising of the young person. This helps keep staff fresh and able to complete a good-quality shift, while retaining good continuity for the young person.

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 the '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 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 'Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards'.

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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