

Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	01/12/2015
Unique reference number	SC486479
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered manager	Tracey Beales
Inspector	Chris Peel

Inspection date	01/12/2015
Previous inspection judgement	N/A
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	Outstanding

SC486479

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- The manager and her deputy have, within a relatively short time, established a strong ethos of prioritising the needs of children and young people and of seeking to continually develop practice to achieve that aim.
- The whole staff team are working well to meet the objectives set out in the statement of purpose and there are clear methods and processes in place for them to do so. Considerable effort is made to ensure different shift groups are consistent in approach.
- All children and young people are making progress against the point of admission, some significantly particularly in the areas of increasing participation in the life of the home, education and building significant relationships with adults. Where this progress fluctuates the staff team take into account possible causes and work to reduce their impact.
- Not all the young people in placement are verbal but their wishes, views and feelings are sought as much as those who can tell staff what they think. PECS and observation of mood and behaviour are used effectively to this end.
- When professionals and family members were asked for views of the home several commented on the cleanliness and tidiness of the premises: testament to the maintenance and cleaning routines and quick repairs for any damage. This preserves the atmosphere of homeliness for children and young people.
- The manager and staff work well with other professionals and family members involved in the care of children. There is excellent communication with placing authorities and parents, who feel they are kept up to date with developments and that their views are listened and responded to. A social worker said, 'they send a weekly report and comeback to me promptly if not available when I call. They took note of my comments and sort things'.
- The manager and deputy manager have a rare talent for seeing the 'big picture', with a clear vision for the home (including excellent site development and workforce plans) and having an eye for detail (not a single health and safety check was found to have been missed).

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):

- The children's guide should help children to understand how to contact the Office of the Children's Commissioner. (Guide to Children's Homes Regulations 4.21, page 24).
- The registered person should ensure that all incidents of control, discipline and restraint are subject to systems of regular scrutiny to ensure that their use is fair and that there is sufficient detail in records to identify patterns and trends. (Guide to Children's Homes Regulations 9.36 page 46)
- The registered person should oversee the welfare of children through engagement with professionals involved in the care of each child including their Independent Reviewing Officer and seek advice from education professionals, such as the Virtual School Head, if a child's progress is not in line with agreed targets. (Guide to Children's Homes Regulations 10.23, p 54 and 5.11, p28)

Full report

Information about this children's home

This is newly registered children's home for up to five young people with learning difficulties. It is run by a private organisation and all the young people currently resident at the home are educated at the provider's school, located at another site.

This was the home's first inspection.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
Not applicable.		

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
Children and young people benefit from the care of dedicated staff who share the home's strong ethos of enhancing their life experiences. Many have come with experience of working with children who have autistic spectrum conditions and others are starting a new career in the sector. All have undergone considerable training to equip them for the work and have effective management support to promote high standards. Discussions with staff members and observation of their interactions with young people demonstrate a detailed knowledge of each child that underpins very good practice. During the inspection, for example, a young person grabbed the hair of a staff member but calm use of techniques known to work resulted in him releasing his grip and the incident did not escalate. More generally, activities and menus are tailored to the needs of individual children who are also given appropriate choices. Such a skilled approach is enabling children and young people to develop trust in staff with an attendant reduction of anxieties. This brings out their characters, such as a latent sense of humour, and promotes gradual progress. This includes a greater willingness to join in the social life of the home, with one young person no longer confining herself to her bedroom but willing to be in the communal areas and two others prepared to share an activity and enjoy one another's company at least for some of the time. One young person's behaviour has calmed so that when he is not worried about issues outside the control of staff he is able to manage without the need to be restrained as frequently as he was. He will now asked to be cuddled tightly as a way of getting stimulation and reassurance. It is in the nature of the work that progress is not on a smooth trajectory. Behaviour is seen as a means of communication so when it dips the manager and staff work hard to identify potential reasons and develop new strategies to counter them. Given the relatively short time the young people have been resident in the home it is not possible to evaluate the long term success of this approach. Children and young people have ample opportunity to give voice to their wishes and feelings: a moans and groans box is available for them to post any issues they want to raise either in writing or with a PECS symbol. Key work sessions and house meetings specifically request feedback on what young people like or dislike and gather suggestions for improvements to the home. As a result a trampoline and barbeque have been bought for the garden and new activities organised.	

Children and young people with speech were able to say they had strong relationships with particular staff members, often key workers, and warmth and affection was also demonstrated.

Feedback that indicates a young person is unhappy with anything is conscientiously followed up, bringing in someone from outside the home when it is difficult to link to a specific issue or problem. Nothing is dismissed without careful consideration; observations (including those made during the inspection) are that all children are generally happy and enjoy being at the home.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
Transitions into the home are generally carefully prepared although the process maybe short to avoid creating anxiety for the child concerned. Plans are drawn up even if occasionally written after the event. These contribute to the initial success of placements. One young person has been moved to another of the organisation's facilities, the one he came from, after it become clear his needs could not be met here. The situation was not helped by the provider changing arrangements for this young person's education to be solely catered for at the home just prior to admission. An enquiry held by the manager and deputy manager show lessons have been learned. Various strategies are employed to make discussion of potentially difficult issues as open as possible. For example, the children's guide includes a section on sex and sexuality, showing that these are areas they will be helped with. Key workers address issues such as bullying and diversity, often using exercises or social stories. These discussions are recorded even if not planned as opportunities are taken when they arise, although the fact that a young person may have raised the topic is not always apparent. Key workers, in conjunction with the rest of the team are responsible for the setting of individual targets and reviewing them. A progress chart measures how far they have been achieved and demonstrate success with tasks that include self-care, household 'chores' and socialisation. Some long term aims are not sufficiently broken down to measure the small steps taken towards attaining them. The staff support children and young people's education through promoting attendance and daily liaison with school staff. The children's guide and information on how to complain is available in written and PECS forms. The former includes details about organisations who may be	

contacted if required, including the availability of an advocate. It does not include the Office of the Children's Commissioner, though, which is specified in statutory guidance.

Children and young people are helped to follow their designated religion. Dietary requirements are followed with care, consulting with family to ensure this complies with their wishes. Parents spoken to were very happy with the care offered to their children. One said 'I'm so happy with how they are looking after my son', adding 'I love the staff there.'

The environment of the home is maintained to a very high standard and the safety of children is underwritten by meticulous risk assessments and monitoring processes, including those for fire prevention. Recording of recruitment shows that safe practice is followed and procedures for administering medication are robust.

There have been no instances of young people going missing from the home, but the eventuality has been anticipated with actions plans in place and 'grab cards' about each resident ready to pass on to appropriate authorities. Four young people have been subject to restraints and only one had a sanction imposed. Monitoring of these is rigorous but some records need to be clearer about the location of incidents and their antecedents so that readers have a better picture of what happened beforehand.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Outstanding
The family members, staff and other professionals spoken to were agreed that the home is particularly well managed. The manager and her deputy were frequently named together by staff, reflecting a strong partnership that sets the tone for the home. Staff said: 'they (manager and deputy) have a lot of experience we can draw on. If not here we can always call them;' and 'They are brilliant, really supportive. They will stay to cover shifts and roll their sleeves up'. Induction and further training equip staff for working with the children living at the home, including attachment disorders, autism and a course planned on 'accidental counselling'. The team have benefitted from a number starting together, establishing a cohesion that newer members have also entered into. This gives a level of confidence for managers and workers to be open to suggestions, to try new ideas and to learn if things don't go as hoped. One member of staff commented 'we are doing our best but someone may come up with better ideas and we would try something different'. Another reflected on the importance of 'adapting to changing needs' so that as children and young people grow or	

circumstances change this is responded to promptly.

Managers have a detailed understanding of each young person and establish good working relationships with their allocated social workers. They and their supervisors are very appreciative of the co-operation given by the staff; one said, 'I would highly recommend the home'. Such good liaison includes opposing changes to care plans not considered to be in a child's best interests. A social work manager commented that staff had 'aired their opinions professionally' when such a challenge was made.

Currently 'everything goes through the social worker' and other key personnel, Independent Reviewing Officers and Virtual School Heads, have not been spoken to and contact details were not available. Liaison with health professionals has, however, been stronger, leading to prompt appointments to address mental health issues particularly.

The culture of continuous improvement is further evident in broader issues; the manager has a vision for the home and areas she wants to develop, such as involvement of young people in the community. These are articulated in comprehensive development and workforce plans. The location risk assessment addresses all potential dangers but does not evaluate the opportunities of the home being situated where it is.

Children's files are in very good order with exemplary placement plans, risk assessments and personal profiles. Some key documents (personal education, pathway and health plans) are not yet available as the meetings/appointments have either just been or are yet to be held.

Managers promote the highest professional standards whilst ensuring young people have an attractive living environment in which they can thrive. So successful are they in this that one member of staff remarked, 'it does not feel like you are coming to work, it is a 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 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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