

Inspection report for children's home

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<b>Unique reference number</b>	SC013402
<b>Inspector</b>	Barbara (Polly) Polain
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Full
<b>Provision subtype</b>	Children's home

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<b>Registered person</b>	Action for Children
<b>Registered person address</b>	Action for Children 3 The Boulevard, Ascot Road WATFORD WD18 8AG
<b>Responsible individual</b>	Shelagh Margaret Zoe Frankcom
<b>Registered manager</b>	Graham Michael O'Connor
<b>Date of last inspection</b>	18/02/2014

<b>Inspection date</b>	21/10/2014
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Previous inspection	satisfactory progress
Enforcement action since last inspection	none

<b>This inspection</b>	
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>good</b>
Outcomes for children and young people	good
Quality of care	good
Keeping children and young people safe	good
Leadership and management	good

## Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	<b>good</b>
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This is a large home which offers both residential care and a short breaks service across three separate but adjoining units. The home has a large garden as well as several separate play areas.

Young people make good progress relative to their starting points in all aspects of their welfare and development. This is because the home develops realistic and achievable targets for young people which are individually tailored to their personal needs. Staff are suitably experienced and trained to work with young people with complex developmental and medical needs and can demonstrate a good understanding of these. Keyworkers are assigned to all young people using the service and are provided with the specialist training they require. For instance, some staff are trained in the use of 'epipens' and others in gastric feeding. Staff engage positively with young people constantly and encourage and promote individual achievement and progress.

Children and young people have established forums to ensure they have input into the running of the home as well as the selection of staff. Managers ensure that there is a high level of consultation with young people and are looking at ways in which more young people can contribute further, especially in the case of young people with very limited communication.

Positive behaviour is encouraged and staff have easily accessible information as to each child's 'trigger points' through the newly developed 'my plans'. This ensures that safeguarding incidents can be minimised and those that do occur are responded to rapidly.

Boundaries and expectations are expressed through the use of targets and these are aimed at increasing independence and developing socialisation skills. Sanctions are hardly ever used as the home finds that by identifying underlying causes, behavioural issues can be responded to more effectively.

Leadership and management arrangements are strong. Managers are effective at identifying weaknesses and securing improvements. An example of this is the introduction of 'My plans' which streamline young people's profiles and provide staff with important information 'at a glance'. Further improvements include the proposed expansion of the young people's forum arrangements to provide greater inclusiveness, especially to young people with severe communication difficulties.

The home has appropriate security to ensure the safety of young people, however risk reduction and security measures are balanced with the expectation that young people will engage in enjoyable activities.

## Full report

### Information about this children's home

This children's home is a purpose-built complex run by a registered charity in partnership with a local authority. The home provides short stay services to children and young people who have high support needs. The home is split into two units; it provides services for up to 12 children and young people at any one time.

### Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
18/02/2014	Interim	satisfactory progress
21/10/2013	Full	adequate
07/03/2013	Interim	satisfactory progress
20/11/2012	Full	adequate

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

#### Recommendations

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

- ensure the home provides a comfortable and homely environment and is well maintained and decorated. (NMS 10.3)

## Inspection judgements

### Outcomes for children and young people **good**

Children and young people make good progress relative to their starting points. Achievable and realistic targets are set based upon the individual needs of each young person and having regard to their developmental capacities. For example, one young person arrived in placement at the home unable to sleep through the night in his own bed. The home worked intensively with the young person with a step by step approach until he was able to stay in his own bed and sleep through the night without disturbance.

Young people also make progress in acquiring independence skills. Some young people have learned to eat independently and others to sit at the table for a meal without disturbing other children. File recordings indicate that manageable targets are set 'I am learning not to take food from other people's plates'.

The home uses both PECS and Makaton signing as methods of communication with young people who are non-verbal. The home works with all young people to improve communication using whichever system is most comfortable or appropriate to the young person's needs. In order to achieve this, the home employs experienced and confident workers who understand the need to engage young people in order to encourage and support progress in the use of signage systems.

The home has established strong links with schools and staff understand the need to adopt a multi-agency approach in order to achieve the best outcomes for young people. The home also links into other services in the area to ensure that young people can access the most suitable resources and as a result, have the best chance of expanding their abilities and skills.

Managers at the home ensure there is sufficient good quality home cooked food available to young people and opportunities to take exercise ensuring that young people can lead healthy lifestyles during their time at the home. The home is a few minutes' walk from extensive parklands and play areas. Young people are regularly taken on outings here and to local places of interest, ensuring they have opportunities for exercise and outdoor activities.

The home works closely with nearby medical facilities including a large local hospital and young people's own GP practices.

The home also works closely with families. Parents note that the home provides valuable insights and suggestions especially in regard to managing challenging behaviour: 'staff are very knowledgeable here, they are always encouraging and will come up with some good ideas too.'

## Quality of care

**good**

Children and young people enjoy positive and constructive relationships with staff. Experienced and trained workers engage with young people to encourage appropriate behaviour and learning. Each child has targets and these represent significant steps towards achieving greater independence and improved social skills. For instance: 'I will learn how to put my bag in the cupboard when I arrive and when I take my coat off, I will put it on a hook'.

The views of service users are actively sought via a forum and representatives interview prospective staff members and have a say in who comes to work in their home. Managers are developing plans to change the forum arrangements to enable young people with severe communication problems to take a greater part in the process.

Children are cared for in line with individual care plans and these are of high quality with achievable and realistic targets agreed in consultation with social workers, parents and other professionals. Some are working towards achieving greater independence in terms of personal care, eating and sleeping.

The home provides a healthy environment for young people where they are able to access good quality services and support which meet their physical, emotional and psychological needs. Healthy food is prepared by staff and young people are encouraged to take exercise and to enjoy outdoor activities. The home has a large well equipped garden and adjoining parklands so there is ample space for children to play and enjoy a range of activities.

Staff are proactive in regard to engaging with young people to increase independence and skill levels. Staff receive a high standard of training which offers opportunities to specialise as well as meeting basic training needs. For instance, all staff are undertaking training in safeguarding and first aid.

Staff encourage educational achievement and small steps towards independence are praised. Staff say they enjoy the work: 'I would not want to work anywhere else' and 'it's all about the children for us'.

The home caters well for young people's diverse cultural needs. This is reflected in the diversity of the staffing cohort and in the range of food on offer at the home as well as in the way the home promotes diversity in daily living and care planning.

The home is well located to take advantage of good local services and resources. It is a purpose built care home and as such the design is suited to the current use. Maintenance is carried out in a timely manner and although the decoration could be improved to provide a more homely appearance, the basic fabric and décor is of an

acceptable standard.

### **Keeping children and young people safe    good**

The home is equipped with security systems that ensure young people are safe at the home. There are also sufficient numbers of staff available on each shift to ensure the individual needs of each young person are met and they can be kept safe. Files kept at the home indicate that each young person's support requirements are carefully assessed before placement occurs, or in the case of emergency placements, information is gathered as rapidly as possible afterwards. When this happens managers gather information from parents, social workers and other professionals. Children's files indicate that in situations such as this, the home quickly arranges meetings at the home to ensure staff and managers are an integral part of the child's network.

Experienced and vigilant staff ensure there is no bullying and young people on short breaks are carefully matched with each other to ensure the safety of each young person in the group. Young people of similar abilities and temperaments are generally matched in terms of timetables, having regard to their personalities and needs.

Staff use individualised strategies to support positive behaviour and any incidents are managed safely. Log book recordings confirm that when incidents do occur, they are analysed thoroughly to ensure lessons are learned and action is taken to ensure the incident is not repeated.

Risk assessments are individual and carefully designed to include details of any known risk factors for each child. These are updated in light of any incidents or events which could impact on safeguarding arrangements. Any safeguarding incident, however minor, is thoroughly evaluated with a view to analysing how behaviour management for that child could be improved. For instance, log book recordings indicate that when two young people who each had triggers for food preparation and meal times, were in the same room waiting for the evening meal to be prepared, they became frustrated with each other as each wanted to be in the best place to watch staff preparing the food. Managers and staff quickly realised that in order to avoid future build ups of tension, it would be preferable to keep these young people separate from each other during meal preparation.

Staff and volunteers working in the home are carefully vetted and selected. This is done centrally by the local authority, although managers interview staff for the home at the premises in conjunction with representatives of the service user group, through the young people's forum meetings.

The environment is physically safe and secure and secure. Fire checks are in place and the home has fire doors throughout. There are regular fire drills and this year the home has focused on night fire drills as this was identified as a weakness at the last inspection. Young people do not go missing from the home. Outings are carefully risk assessed and sufficient staff are allocated to ensure young people are kept safe in the community. Visitors to the home are checked in and out in the foyer before being let into areas in which young people live. One play area of the home is used by community mother and toddler groups but this is separated from the rest of the home by security locked double doors and physically by a dividing wall and staircase.

Young people are monitored where necessary to ensure their own safety but this is risk assessed before the placement and immediately after. The type of monitoring used is the 'baby monitor' type and is to ensure children and young people who may have night time fits can be accommodated safely at the home.

## **Leadership and management**

**good**

The home is effectively and efficiently managed by suitably qualified and permanent managers.

Managers ensure that any complaints are dealt with in a timely manner. There are appropriate avenues for complaints to be made and young people are encouraged to have input into the running of the home through the young people's forum meetings. In addition, the home has a 'recruit crew' which is a group of young people who prepare questions and then interview prospective staff in order to ensure young people have a voice in regard to who works in their home.

The home can demonstrate capacity for continuous improvement and development. Managers are exploring ways in which the service can be offered to more young people by expanding services to neighbouring boroughs.

Requirements and recommendations from the previous inspection have now been met and the current managers have updated policies, procedures and recording systems to ensure compliance with all legislative frameworks. An example of this is the focus on fire safety drills with night staff. Meetings were organised to ensure all night staff were familiar with the evacuation routines and a timed 'dummy run' was held in January this year to ensure the evacuation could take place within the necessary timescales. Managers commented that they 'learned a lot' from this and were able to identify areas for improvement in the plans. A training matrix for all staff has also been introduced by managers. This ensures that training needs can be identified quickly and the need for essential training to be renewed is flagged up in a timely manner. Arrangements for the production of independent visitor reports have also been improved to ensure these are sent to regulating authorities in a timely



manner.

The provider meets the aims and objectives of the home as set out in the statement of purpose and children, staff and social workers are clear as to the services the home provides. The statement of purpose is regularly updated and includes details of the recently opened residential unit.

Leaders and managers can demonstrate the impact the service has on the lives of young people by facilitating the collection of feedback data from services users and professionals. Social workers speak highly of the service: 'we are lucky to have a service like this in our borough' and 'I would not hesitate to recommend it to other workers'. Other social workers and parents remarked that they 'felt safe' leaving young people at the home and had always found staff 'caring and competent'. One parent remarked: 'I can sleep at night' when her child was at the home. Parents particularly praised the current managers saying 'they have made a big difference to how the home runs': 'It has always been a good place but now the systems and administration are a lot better and everything seems to be better organised'.

The needs of each young person are carefully assessed at management level to ensure sufficient staff are on duty to ensure safety and the needs of the child are met. Staff are selected based on competence and skills and state 'this is a very good place to work'.

The physical environment is maintained to a good standard and essential repairs are dealt with promptly. Nonetheless the units have a slightly institutional feel and are not as pleasantly presented and homely as they could be. A recommendation of this inspection is that some improvements be made in this regard.

Managers liaise with social workers to ensure that visits and reviews take place on time. Social workers say the home works well with them and they are made welcome on visits and receive information mostly in a timely fashion. One social worker remarked that this is an area the home could improve upon by ensuring that social workers are informed immediately if any incidents occur involving a young person.

Staff receive good quality training and have a reasonable understanding of the roles of professionals and the requirements of reporting and safeguarding.

Records and log books are clear and up to date. The home is developing 'my plans' which contain all relevant information about each young person in one place. It is envisaged that one will be produced for each young person and this will enable staff to gather vital information in the shortest possible time.

Monthly independent visitor reports are now produced regularly, following changes to the arrangements this year. These are thorough and clear. Any issues identified are followed up by managers in a timely manner and findings made available to the

appropriate authorities through quarterly manager's reports. There are no breaches of regulations that impact negatively on the welfare or safety of young people.

## What inspection judgements mean

Judgement	Description
Outstanding	A service of exceptional quality that significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Good	A service of high quality that exceeds minimum requirements.
Adequate	A service that only meets minimum requirements.
Inadequate	A service that does not meet minimum requirements.

## Information about this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The 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 relevant regulations and meets the national minimum standards.

The report details the main strengths, any areas for improvement, including any breaches of regulation, and any failure to meet national minimum standards. The judgements included in the report are made against the framework of inspection for children's homes.