

Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	23/06/2015
Unique reference number	SC013402
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered person	Action for Children
Registered person address	Action for Children, 3 The Boulevard, Ascot Road, WATFORD, WD18 8AG

Responsible individual	Mrs Shelagh Frankcom
Registered manager	Mr Graham O'Connor Mrs Sarah Howe
Inspector	Mr Angus Mackay

Inspection date	23/06/2015
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	Good

SC013402

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- Children have good relations with a diverse staff group who aid them in maintaining and exploring their cultural identity.
 - Young people in the short break service are meaningfully involved in expressing choices, influencing the running of the home and working in partnership with staff. This has empowered young people and aided the creation of powerful collaborations such as on developing the young people's guide.
 - The managers have successfully addressed previous requirements and recommendations improving the safe care of young people.
 - The home has close and productive working partnerships with local schools.
 - Managers provide effective supervision, training and appraisal to well-balanced, enthusiastic teams of staff.
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- The registration of the home does not accurately record the service.
 - The statement of purpose describes conditions for the short break service which are not in-line with children's homes regulations.
 - The excellent engagement of young people in making decisions and communicating their choices in the short break service is not so well developed in the long-stay setting.
 - The monitoring and evaluation of progress established in the short break setting is not yet fully implemented in the long stay setting.

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 with the given timescales.

The registered person must keep the statement of purpose under review and, where appropriate, revise it; and notify HMCI of any revisions and send HMCI a copy of the revised statement within 28 days of the revision. (Regulation 16(a)(b))

Ensure that no single placement in the short breaks home is intended to last for more than 17 days and the short breaks to date do not exceed 75 days in total in any twelve month period. (Regulation 52(b)(i)(iii))

Recommendations

The design of the home should include any necessary adaptation to meet the needs of children with disabilities or specific health issues. In particular children should be able to summon assistance during the night. (The Guide, page 17, paragraph 3.24)

All staff in a care role including external agency or bank staff, must have the qualification in Regulation 32(4) within the relevant timescale listed in Regulation 32(5). (The Guide, page 53, paragraph 10.12)

Children should be supported to express themselves as individuals and should be given an appropriate degree of freedom and choice in relation to day-to-day arrangements for their care; in particular communication should be improved in the long-stay home. (The Guide, page 17, paragraph 3.21)

The registered person must lead and manage the home in a way that delivers the ethos, outcomes and approach set out in the home's statement of purpose. In particular they must ensure that targets in the long-stay setting are achievable and regularly reviewed. (The Guide, page 52, paragraph 10.4)

Full report

Information about this children's home

This is a large home which offers both residential care and a short breaks service for children with learning disabilities and/or physical disabilities, in two separate but adjoining units. The residential home provides care and accommodation for up to 5 children. The short breaks home provides care and accommodation for up to 6 children under short break arrangements. The individual units have enclosed play areas, gardens and a shared recreation and office space separating them.

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
21/02/2015	CH - Interim	declined in effectiveness
21/10/2014	CH - Full	Good
18/02/2014	CH - Interim	Satisfactory Progress
21/10/2013	CH - Full	Adequate

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	good
<p>Young people have good relationships with staff. The numbers, diversity and continuity of staffing helps young people in forming the good attachments described in the statement of purpose. Staff are friendly and responsive to young people's needs. They use sign, picture exchange and clear verbal communication with young people, ensuring they are actively involved in all decisions and discussions. Some young people ask staff to teach them other languages and enthusiastically practise their new skills. Another benefit of the diverse staff team is helping young people to discuss their family backgrounds in a meaningful way. For example, staff and young people enjoyed a lively discussion on the meaning of various patois words, initiated by one young person.</p> <p>Staff help young people to follow their cultural and religious beliefs. The degree of this varies between the short and long-stay homes. In the long stay home, parents and family are encouraged to visit so young people retain their cultural links. In the short-stay setting, young people complete story books, cooking and discussion related to their culture. A young person's social worker commented, 'They do meet his cultural needs he is of Christian background and they make sure he can follow this.'</p> <p>Participation in decision making varies from 'outstanding' to 'requires improvement' in the differing settings. Managers are aware of the diverse standard and are implementing change in a gradual and excellently-planned way. Parents and young people have completed the first stage of an extensive consultation which seeks to involve young people in making real choices in the home and influence overall communication. One example is the drafting of a new young people's guide. Young people have contributed ideas and staff ensure that there is good feedback to them. This has produced a meaningful and effective end-product. In the short break service, young people have completed activity planners which effectively display their likes and dislikes. Staff are less effective at implementing this in the long-stay setting.</p> <p>The home works closely with schools, in particular sharing information on young people's ways of communicating. Staff engage with local schools ensuring they transfer effective processes back to the staff team. Staff in schools say that young people receive good support from the home ensuring they are properly prepared for school. One headteacher said, 'Families very much value the home. The</p>	

complex needs of the young people are met, and they look creatively at activities. The feedback from families is very positive. They are a very valued provision.' Communication between the home and school is good, This ensures that each setting can best meet young people's needs. Staff attend all meetings, providing detailed reports and make helpful contributions to the process. Schools describe the home as 'proactive' and a valued part of child protection.

Young people have achievable targets which staff monitor daily. In the short break home, targets are specific to each young person and come from discussion with young people, parents, social workers and schools. Staff regularly monitor young people's targets, while managers analyse outcomes and change targets as required. This careful tracking accurately records the small but significant progress young people make, for example learning how to brush their teeth. Managers know that staff are less effective at monitoring change in the long-stay setting. This is included as an area for improvement in the service's development plan.

Managers ensure that all staff train in: the safe handling, administration and storing of medication; first aid; and safe manual handling. Staff apply guidelines on medication control rigorously and managers check the receipt, issuing, transfer and disposal of medication. On the rare occasions when an error has occurred, the comprehensive checking of medication ensures staff can take immediate action to safeguard young people, including notifying their parents.

Young people's medical needs are appropriately met by various measures. Staff check all young people for marks, sores or other unreported issues. Parents say that the home are very strict with these checks and feel reassured by their communication and discussion. Where staff have failed to follow care guidelines, managers initially address this through supervision and training to ensure young people receive good care. One parent says, 'They are honest about care issues and will tell me everything. As they always inform me, I know I can trust them.' Community nurses complete more complex medical procedures with assistance from care staff.

Young people enjoy a wide range of innovative activities both in and out of the home. Staff interact with them appropriately but also give them time alone when they request this. Young people are empowered by the choice they are given about organising their leisure time. For example, one older young person chose to have her meal later than the younger children, and staff facilitated this. In another example young people are sensitively supervised allowing them to make or do individual activities but also be safely observed by staff.

Many young people struggle with transitions and in communicating this to staff. Effective communication aids have been produced for staff to use with them. This allows young people to manage their anxieties in public places and plan small transitions, such as ending an activity and returning to the home. This also helps

young people to prepare for reviews. For example, one made a communication sheet showing he wished to discuss; feelings; friends; activities; moving on; and contributing to the meeting. The staff are working with schools in helping young people in their transition planning. One headteacher said, 'They work very well with us and are very positive in moving forward with children. Input from them to adult services is very valuable in planning transitions.'

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
<p>Young people are relaxed with staff and those who are verbal say they feel safe and well cared for in the home. One says, 'I was anxious and afraid when I was told I was coming here but I really like it now and feel very safe. The staff are all nice.' The home has a robust approach to issues of children's safety. For example, all staff have trained in safeguarding and the safe-handling of young people. The safeguarding policy is a comprehensive document which provides clear guidelines to staff. They are knowledgeable about how to protect children and apply this in their practice. Staff talk enthusiastically about their child-centred approach to care and how they keep children safe. They have applied the whistleblowing policy in practice, enhancing young people's safe care. The staff work closely with the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) in responding to any serious issues. An investigation into a serious allegation is ongoing with staff taking all appropriate steps to ensure young people's safety. The placing social worker said, 'They reported the incident when it was notified to them and acted immediately to involve the LADO.'</p> <p>Staff create positive risk assessments enabling young people to safely undertake a wide range of activities. They make good use of the excellent in-house resources for entertaining and educating young people. Staff ensure that they manage risks to young people's safety appropriately and none have gone missing. The building is subject to all relevant health and safety checks and staff maintain a detailed fire risk assessment. The fire authority has approved all escape routes including garden gates. All young people have personal evacuation plans and managers have noted, in their development plan, that these should be more accessible in an emergency.</p> <p>The home is undergoing a major refurbishment, ensuring that all areas are suitably decorated and maintained. Repairs to equipment are prioritised by managers ensuring young people receive care in a safe, well-maintained environment. One young person says that she loves her room but feels isolated at times and would</p>	

like a means of summoning staff assistance. Other rooms do have various means of alerting staff to young people's needs.

Managers follow safer recruitment guidelines to aid their selection of appropriate staff to work with vulnerable children. Young people are fully involved in staff recruitment. Their engagement aids in the selection of appropriate people to work with vulnerable young people. Staff are also required to do a presentation to young people which contributes to their appointment. One recent interviewee said, 'I thought this was the most important part of the interview. It checked I knew how to communicate with young people and also made me reveal something of myself. Those who cannot do this would struggle to do the job.'

In encouraging positive behaviour and good relationships in the home staff strive to uphold the philosophy of care outlined in the statement of purpose. Staff focus on building good relationships with young people and their families as a basis for achieving positive outcomes. Where physical intervention is used, staff record in detail to aid analysis and changes to behaviour support plans or risk assessments. Staff's skills in forming relationships and applying guidance in the behavioural plans has significantly reduced the number of restraints.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
<p>The setting has two Registered Managers who share responsibilities for the short break service and the long stay children's home. Both managers registered with Ofsted in 2013 and have lengthy experience in the management of staff and the care of children with learning and physical disabilities. One manager did not have an appropriate level 5 qualification and was completing this in-service. She has subsequently resigned from her post without completing the course. The home have commenced the recruitment of a replacement manager. The second manager has an appropriate management qualification. Both managers have successfully completed a range of additional training courses relevant to their roles. This includes: advanced safeguarding; fire marshal; risk assessment; and various courses directly relevant to the presenting issues of the young people in the home.</p> <p>The managers have successfully addressed the requirements and recommendations set at the last inspection. In particular, they have evidenced that fire safety measures are suitable and they have improved the security of young people's files.</p>	

Managers have improved the quality and frequency of submission, of internal and external monitoring reports. The independent person's reports are suitably detailed, containing helpful interviews with all relevant persons. Managers use the information from these reports to aid in their quality assurance. They have submitted regular monitoring reports to HMCI. These reports evidence their awareness of areas for further development. In addition they have an ambitious development plan for both parts of the home and a comprehensive workforce plan. The development plan clearly shows the manager's clear understanding of all the strengths and weaknesses of the homes. For example, many of the issues raised during this inspection are already identified in the development plan.

Managers have reviewed staffing since the last inspection. There is ongoing recruitment which has resulted in an increase of permanent staff. Rotas accurately reflect the staffing in place and show balanced teams. Where agency or bank staff are used they are always working with permanent and experienced staff. Parents confirm that staff are knowledgeable about their children and provide a good service. One parent saying, 'All staff are knowledgeable about her and good at communicating. They all can tell me what she has eaten or done. They do their best to help you. I would describe them as excellent.'

The workforce development plan clearly covers all relevant areas. Staff receive regular professional supervision which is child focused and encourages staff to accept additional responsibilities. Poor performance is appropriately addressed using supervision, appraisal, training and competency guidelines. Staff benefit from a detailed competency-based appraisal system which managers use effectively to recognise good performance or identify further training needs. There is good planning of professional training, ensuring staff embarking on level 3 qualifications and receive appropriate support. This ensures that all staff, including night care staff, have their work appropriately assessed. The home have worked closely with providers of agency staff to register staff to complete an appropriate vocational qualification, although this has not yet commenced.

The statement of purpose accurately describes the service provided by the home. Ofsted have registered the setting as a long-stay children's home. However, this is inaccurate as there is long stay children's home and a separate short break service. This error has contributed to the short break service accommodating a resident beyond the approved number of days. The home commenced a revision of the statement of purpose during the inspection and Ofsted corrected the registration accordingly.

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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