

Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	09/12/2015
Unique reference number	SC055780
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered person	Autism Initiatives (UK)
Registered person address	Autism Initiatives UK, 7 Chesterfield Road, LIVERPOOL, L23 9XL

Responsible individual	Katharine Silver
Registered manager	Karen Taylor
Inspector	Chris Scully

Inspection date	09/12/2015
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	Outstanding
The children's home provides highly effective services that consistently exceeds the standards of good. The actions of the home contribute to significantly improved outcomes for children and young people who need help, protection and care.	
how well children and young people are helped and protected	Outstanding
the impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Outstanding

SC055780

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is outstanding because:

A highly committed manager and deputies lead the home. Their enthusiasm for their job is infectious and is mirrored by the staff team. Parents describe the staff as 'brilliant, fabulous, and wonderful.'

Communication with young people is key to the success of the home. High levels of consultation means young people have a clear voice and as such have a strong sense of belonging. They are extremely well consulted and supported to make decisions about their own well-being at the appropriate level of understanding.

Young people are safe and feel safe here. Highly effective strategies and support are effectively implemented to reduce young people's anxieties. Parents said, 'if your child has to live away from home this is where you want them to be.'

Young people are becoming as independent as possible in line with their starting point. For some young people this has meant they no longer need to use a wheelchair. Something his parents are extremely proud of. For others it is undertaking a range of household tasks, which prepare them for adulthood.

Staff have a 'can do' attitude. They continually think 'outside of the box' to enable young people achieve the simplest of tasks to support their independence. For example, assisting one young lady on deciding how to apply make-up and selecting a style she liked.

Transitions are extremely well planned and are totally child-focussed. A parent said, their child 'would not have achieved everything they have, if it were not for the home. They are working with us and social workers to ensure she has the right plan in place for moving into adult services.' As a result this young person is increasing in confidence about moving on and has a say in what is happening.

There are some minor issues concerning monitoring reports and the information on how some staff's suitability is assessed. These issues do not affect the excellent care provided to young people.

All staff work tirelessly to ensure all young people get the right support. A parent said, 'I cannot thank them enough the progress in him is great. He is happy here and is doing so well, he has settled in and made friends. This is very much a family that care deeply about one another.'

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):

- Ensure the registered person makes best use of any information from independent and internal monitoring to ensure continuous improvement. In particular, reports are evaluative, show what the home does well and identifies any shortfalls, patterns or trends and the action taken to address these. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 55, paragraph 10.24)
- Ensure that recruitment of staff safeguards children and minimises potential risks in particular there are clear systems for recording how the suitability of staff has been evaluated (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 61, paragraph 13.1)

Full report

Information about this children's home

The home is registered to care for up to eight young people with a learning disability. All young people considered for placement experience autistic spectrum disorder with associated communication and sensory impairment and possible learning disability. The home is owned by a national organisation. Young people who access this service access the organisation's school.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
11/02/2015	CH - Interim	improved effectiveness
16/07/2014	CH - Full	Good
26/03/2014	CH - Interim	Satisfactory Progress
10/12/2013	CH - Full	Good

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	outstanding
<p>Young people flourish in a warm, welcoming, homely environment. They thoroughly enjoy extremely positive relationships with staff, which are built upon honesty and trust. The progress of young people is exceptional across all areas of their development. Consequently, their life chances and opportunities are significantly enhanced. Young people's individual needs, likes, dislikes, and preferences are highly respected. Staff are skilled at identifying these and put effective plans in place to support them. As a result, each young person is able to shine.</p> <p>Staff continually strive to engage young people in new experiences, such as taking part in Christmas activities or having their bedroom decorated. Parents said, 'this is wonderful' for their daughter as she is now personalising her bedroom. Others are now able to have Christmas decorations up in the home and have enjoyed the opportunities to wear their Christmas jumpers to school. This is a massive achievement for them, significantly enhancing their confidence. Ultimately, this has enabled them to take part in a wider range of activities both in the home and the wider community.</p> <p>Young people love spending time with staff. This is because staff listen carefully to young people. They are genuinely interested in what they have to say and welcome their suggestions as to what they or the home can do differently. For example, explaining why young people cannot go to the shops at night as they are closed. But, they make arrangements to take them the following day. Young people enjoy an extensive range of activities, which encompass their own personal interests.</p> <p>A key strength of the provision is the proactive approach taken by all staff to reduce young people's anxieties. Staff work tirelessly to help young people manage transitions better and to be able to communicate their feelings. As a result, young people who are new to the homes have seen their attendance at school dramatically improve. Not only are they now attending school, but are now taking part in class. Hence, their educational attainment is much improved.</p> <p>His social worker said, 'to be in school is a massive change and lots of work has been completed by staff to achieve this. Over last three months, I can see the difference in him, he is more settled in school is engaging with others and wanting to do things.'</p>	

Others are more able to cope with change such as meeting new people. One young person spent time with the inspector patiently articulating how to play a variety of computer games. He engaged purposefully and his confidence shone through as he skilfully demonstrated how to successfully complete the game. Staff explained that, for this young person his level of interaction was phenomenal and demonstrates how he has grown in confidence since living here. This is a view shared by parents who are rightfully proud of his achievements and commented that, 'we couldn't wish for a better place for our son. His achievements are wonderful; they turn a can't do into a can do.'

Other young people excitedly engaged with the inspector with one happily explaining how she was getting new boots. Staff skilfully intervened when she became a little 'giddy' so as to reassure her and reduce her anxieties. Her social worker confirmed that staff are intuitive and know when to step in to help her manage her emotions.

Staff leave nothing to chance. Consequently, they are currently working with four social worker's on the plans for when the young people leave the home. They are driving forward meetings to discuss the possibility of the young people continuing to live together in adulthood. This is because of the strong bonds they have made. This is being carefully considered by social workers and the families who can see the benefit in this for their children.

Young people are treated with the utmost dignity. Their privacy is highly respected and their independence promoted. For example one young person has asked to bathe without staff support. This was risk assessed and a pictorial guide created to enable him to see to his own personal needs. As a result, he is much more independent and takes more control and responsibility for his own needs.

Staff are working with another young person who wears a harness when out in the community. Staff are now actively researching other items to help keep him safe which are less obtrusive, such as a backpack which staff can hold if necessary. They are working sensitively with the young person to encourage him to hold their hand on trips. This offers subtle reassurance and prevents his anxieties rising, which could result in him running off.

Staff said they want to the young people to be as independent as possible. They identified that a young person was struggling to sort their own laundry. They purchased a new laundry bag with separate compartments for whites, colours and dark clothing. As a result, the young person can successfully sort her laundry with minimal staff intervention, successfully promoting her independence and confidence in her own abilities.

Contact with family is vital for the young people. This is exceptionally well supported by staff. Consequently, young people spend quality time with those people who are important to them. One young person uses facetime to contact

Mum. Staff carefully managed this arrangement in consultation with the family as the young person wanted to facetime every few minutes. Agreement was reached between the young person and her family about when and what time she would call. This means she is now much less anxious as she knows when she calls mum will be there.

Other family's say the time they spend with their child is precious and their children are less anxious and enjoy the visits. Many commented on the success of the family garden party in the summer and the fabulous time everyone had.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	outstanding
<p>Young people said they feel safe and are safe here. This is because staff have an excellent understanding of the home's child protection and safeguarding procedures. This means they are able to act quickly and effectively to any emerging concerns, such as disclosures made by young people. Comprehensive records are maintained and monitored in respect of all aspects of safety and protection; these include detailed individual risk assessments. This means any issues are quickly identified and rectified and also enables young people to take safe appropriate risks. For example going on the mini bus.</p> <p>Young people do not go missing from the home because good staffing levels ensure close but unobtrusive supervision. Additionally comprehensive individualised risk assessments are in place should this occur. These include descriptions of young people and detailed accounts of young people's medication, behaviours, and maps of the known routes they may take. This means police and others would be able to carry out a focussed search for the young people and know how to approach them.</p> <p>The use of physical interventions is very rare. Staff's innate understanding of the young people means they quickly identify when young people are feeling upset or anxious. They provide strategies to young people to enable them to tell them how they are feeling. As a result one young person's need for support has reduced as he is now able to tell staff 'to go'. Meaning he wants his own space. Parents and social worker say this is a massive achievement for him and has significantly reduced his aggressive behaviour towards staff as a result of his frustrations.</p> <p>The staff work extremely well in partnership with other agencies. They said 'The needs of the young people are discussed continuously. There is always someone at the end of a phone.' A social worker said, 'I cannot fault the information I</p>	

received about him or the high levels of clear communication I have with them, they are brilliant!' Parents said, staff are constantly there for them and their children, and 'nothing is too much trouble. We cannot thank them enough!'

The home is well maintained and provides a warm, homely environment, which effectively meets young people's diverse needs. Young people's bedrooms are decorated to their own personal tastes and needs. For example, some are adorned with butterflies while others prefer a minimalistic feel to their room. Ultimately, the bedrooms reflect the uniqueness of the young person and their chosen décor.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	outstanding
<p>The Registered Manager is an inspirational and dynamic leader. She uses research well and attends conferences with staff to inform practice within the home. For example, creating additional individualised time lines to reduce young people's anxieties. This means all staff have high, but reasonable aspirations for each young person regardless of their starting point.</p> <p>The Registered Manager is very well supported by three committed and enthusiastic deputies. This has resulted in a stronger management structure that works well to promote the excellent outcomes for young people. The enthusiasm of the management team is cascaded to all staff who are equally committed to improving the outcomes for young people. They said we want each child to be the best that they can. 'There is no such phrase as can't'. We use research to inform our own learning and share this with everyone so we can try new things to improve things for the young people. For example, the development of the garden and plans to create a sensory area.</p> <p>Monitoring of the home is robust and means shortfalls can be quickly identified and rectified. For example, monitoring of the medication records identified within 24 hours that there was an error for medication in stock. Immediate action and investigation led to further enhancements to the procedures. Such as changing the code on the cabinets weekly and only set staff having access to these. While monitoring practice is robust, written reports by the Registered Manager lack evaluation. This is a recording issue and does not affect the excellent care provided.</p> <p>Record keeping is detailed and allows the uniqueness of each young person to shine. There is one small recording issues in staff files. As it is not clear as to why new references were not undertaken on one member of staff and also how a minimal reference was followed up.</p>	

Robust assessment and matching processes ensure young people coming to live at the home will gain the most from the placement. The Registered Manager effectively analyses the current group of young people and the likely impact upon them and the new young person. Consequently, the newest young people are settling in well with a limited amount of disruption to themselves or others in the home. Social worker said they are impressed at how well their young person has settled into the 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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