

## **Children's homes inspection - full**

<b>Inspection date</b>	<b>25 April 2016</b>
<b>Unique reference number</b>	<b>1226969</b>
<b>Type of inspection</b>	<b>Full</b>
<b>Provision subtype</b>	<b>Children's home</b>
<b>Registered manager</b>	<b>Barbara Marshall</b>
<b>Inspector</b>	<b>Michael Mulvaney</b>

<b>Inspection date</b>	<b>25 April 2016</b>
<b>Previous inspection judgement</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>Enforcement action since last inspection</b>	<b>None</b>
<b>This inspection</b>	
<b>The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are</b>	<b>Requires improvement</b>
The children's home is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.	
<b>How well children and young people are helped and protected</b>	<b>Requires improvement</b>
<b>The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers</b>	<b>Requires improvement</b>

**1226969**

## **Summary of findings**

### **The children's home provision requires improvement because:**

- There is a very small core of permanent staff. The provider supplements this group with agency staff. Although the manager has worked hard to use the same agency staff, this has not always been possible.
- It has taken time for the agency staff to gain the knowledge and skills to be able to meet the needs of the children. This has led to inconsistent management of their care.
- Because of the lack of experience of staff, the standard of care has fluctuated. As a result, the staff are uncertain of how plans for each child are progressing.
- The manager has not completed an evaluation of the impact of the use of agency staff on the progress of children.
- The level of communication between the home and placing authorities is not consistent. This has led to uncertainty as to how the care package is meeting the children's needs.
- Staff are not aware of the process required to report and record incidents when physical intervention occurs. This means that the records of incidents are incomplete and that there is no robust scrutiny of safe-care practice.

## The children's home strengths

- Children are making suitable progress because they live in this home.
- There is positive joint work with other agencies to provide good-quality educational opportunities for the children.
- Staff work hard, in a caring and considerate manner, to meet the needs of the children. The level of commitment from staff is very good, particularly given the changes within the staff group.
- The manager has improved some aspects of the safeguarding practice. She reviews and reports any concerns to the appropriate agencies.
- Children do not go missing from this home. Well-defined missing from care protocols help staff, should an incident when a child goes missing occur. Staff maintain observation of children and a high level of monitoring to ensure that children do not go missing.
- Placing social workers have no concerns about the safeguarding practices in the home.

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

### Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions which must be taken so that the registered person 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 must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
6: The quality of care standard  (2)(b)(iv) In order to meet the quality of care standard, the registered person must ensure that staff provide personalised care that meets each child's needs as recorded in the child's relevant plans, taking into account the child's background.	7 June 2016
12: The leadership and management standard  In order to meet the leadership and management standard, the registered provider must:  (2)(a) lead and manage the home in a way that is consistent	7 June 2016

<p>with the approach and ethos, and deliver outcomes set out in the statement of purpose;</p> <p>(2)(e) ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child;</p> <p>(2)(h) use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home.</p>	
<p>The Registered Person may only employ an individual to work at the children's home if, by the relevant date, the individual has attained the Level 3 Diploma for Residential Childcare (England) ("the Level 3 Diploma"); or a qualification which the Registered Person considers to be equivalent to the Level 3 Diploma. The relevant date is in the case of an individual who starts working in a care role in a home after 1st April 2014, the date which falls 2 years after the date on which the individual started working in a care role in a home; or in the case of an individual who was working in a care role in a home on 1st April 2014, 1st April 2016. (Regulation 32(2)(4)(a)(b)(5)(a)(b))</p>	<p>21 November 2016</p>
<p>The registered person must ensure that within 24 hours of the use of a measure of control, discipline or restraint, in relation to a child in the home, a record is made which includes all the matters set out in regulation 35(3) (Regulation 35(3)(a)(i-viii),(b)(i)(ii),(c)).</p>	<p>7 June 2016</p>

## Recommendations

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

- Ensure that no more than half of the staff on duty at any time, by day or night at the home, should be from an external agency ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards' page 54, paragraph 10.17).

## **Full report**

### **Information about this children's home**

This children's home provides care and accommodation for up to four children with learning disabilities or physical disabilities. A registered charity runs this home.

### **Recent inspection history**

This is this home's first inspection.

## Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
<b>The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are</b>	<b>Requires improvement</b>
<p>Children who have physical, learning, and sensory disabilities live in this home as part of shared care and long-term arrangements. Consequently, they need a high level of consistent and reliable care. Some of the children use a number of different methods to communicate their needs. Some use pictorial systems. Others will use sign language such as Makaton. Some children can make their needs known through gestures and sounds. Staff spend time developing an understanding of the children.</p> <p>There is a very small core group of permanent staff. A number of agency staff supplement this group, to ensure that there are sufficient staff members to manage the children's needs safely. At times, more than half of the staff on a shift are from an agency. Although the manager has worked hard to maintain the same agency staff, this has not always been possible. It has taken time for these agency staff to develop a good working knowledge of the children's needs. Because of this, there has been an inconsistency of care provided.</p> <p>The manager has not undertaken an evaluation of the impact that the use of agency staff is having on the progress of the children. A stakeholder commented, 'We are aware that there has been a number of agency staff and we are not always sure of their skills or knowledge in working with the children. We have been concerned about the lack of consistent care'. Some agency staff have not been aware of the agreed methods of care that the experienced carers use to meet the children's needs. They have recently had mentoring to help them to gain this experience. As a result, some aspects of care have improved.</p> <p>Because the children have such specific individual needs, it is essential that staff record clearly and consistently their interactions with the children. It is equally important that these records identify how each child is responding to their care. Staff work with carefully considered care plans that relate to risk assessment for the children. Some risk assessments do not include updates of recent incidents. As a result, staff are not always working with the most up-to-date information, which could be crucial in meeting the children's needs. Furthermore, the manager has not reviewed the files to ensure that they are in line with agreed policy and procedures. Scrutiny of the files during inspection highlighted misfiling of records and confusion within the staff group about record-keeping. The impact of this could be more significant, but for the thoroughness of the permanent staff ensuring that the correct hands-on practice with the children remained in place.</p>	

Some children are attending schools or colleges that are able to meet their specific learning needs. Each child has an individual education plan which focuses on therapeutic and educational goals. One child receives some tuition at home and some in school, as this helps him to be calmer and more able to work with staff from the home and the school. There are pathway plans in place for those children who are looking at developing skills to live more independently. These skills include cooking and other self-help skills, such as doing their own laundry. Currently, one young person is in the later stages of transition to an adult service provision, for which the staff from this home have supported her in planning towards.

The staff have remained highly committed to the children and are supporting them with activities such as sports clubs at weekends, day trips to theme parks, as well as local trips to garden centres and restaurants. These have helped to promote the children's self-esteem as well as to broaden their experiences. Activities such as regular swimming, along with nutritious home-cooked food, help to maintain the children's overall good health. Some of the children have complex medical needs that require staff to monitor their medication carefully, and to observe their physical welfare, to make sure that they are healthy. Some of the agency staff are only beginning to understand fully these aspects of the children's care.

Staff support ongoing contact with families. Some families have raised their concerns about the consistency of care. Others comment positively on the quality of the care and consideration provided to their children. One commented, 'Staff are great and supportive. They have a warmth and they clearly care.'

	Judgement grade
<b>How well children and young people are helped and protected</b>	<b>Requires improvement</b>
<p>Children in this home have specific learning and communication disabilities. Observation during inspection showed them to be happy and content when interacting with staff. During inspection, when asked if they were happy in the home, one child gestured that she was and smiled. Multi-agency professionals observe and work with these children regularly. They are confident that they are alert to the signs that would raise concerns about the welfare needs of the children. These agencies are not reporting concerns about these children.</p> <p>Most staff are trained to intervene if children are harming themselves or others. This training also helps them to promote de-escalation skills which prevent situations from deteriorating and increasing risks. The core staff have developed ways of working which have reduced the need for restraint. Although these</p>	



incidents have decreased, there have been two occasions when staff have blocked the path of children to prevent them from placing themselves at risk. Staff have not recorded these in the physical interventions log, or cross-referenced them to individual incident records. As a result, the records are incomplete. The manager has failed to recognise this shortfall. Consequently, she is not able to scrutinise the practice in the home robustly. She is also not able to review how staff, collectively, learn from the incident, so that children are safely cared for and better understood.

Staff work with risk assessments. The manager has not reviewed these assessments or case recording to ensure their quality and to check that they contain an evaluation of the most recent incidents. Therefore, they are not as useful as they could be in helping staff to manage risks. For these children, consistent case recording and thorough risk assessments are vital in maintaining a positive oversight of their care needs. Despite this shortfall, staff have been able to reduce some behaviours that have been challenging, through rewarding positive conduct. They have also reduced the need for negative sanctions.

	Judgement grade
<b>The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers</b>	<b>Requires improvement</b>
<p>The manager is a qualified social worker, who also holds a national vocational qualification and registered manager's award. She has a number of years' experience in this sector and of working at this home. She supports all staff through regular supervision. This includes safeguarding matters and the progress that children are making, as well as the training needs for the staff. There is a regular team meeting where discussions are encouraged about issues in the home. The team spends time reflecting on how members can work together to ensure that children's needs are being met. The manager has ensured that thorough checks of all staff are complete, before they start to work in the home. She also ensures that they have basic safeguarding awareness training, as well as health and safety training.</p> <p>The number of vacancies within the permanent staff group means that the manager and permanent staff have been working with the agency staff to develop their skills. This has reduced her attention to the recording and monitoring, and resulted in a lack of robust scrutiny of staff practice. These shortfalls have led to an inconsistent level of care and resulted in the home not fulfilling aspects of the statement of purpose. Some of the staff have completed the National Vocational Qualification level 3. However, some have only recently started this course. As a result, that do not hold the appropriate qualification. The manager has been able</p>	

to employ some agency staff who hold this qualification.

There is a good relationship between the staff and the placing authority. The manager has worked well with the schools and colleges to promote the educational needs of the children. Communication has been more regular in the past, with staff contacting the placing social workers on a weekly basis. This is no longer the case, and this has reduced their effectiveness in working together. For example, a social worker commented, 'At a recent meeting with the child and family mental health service (to discuss a child's behaviour), there were uncertainties shared by the staff from the home who were not up to date with what is happening for the child.' This led to doubts from the multi-agency partners about how capable the staff were in working with plans for the children.

Despite the shortfalls in the home, children are making progress. Staff have supported a teenager to prepare for her transition to an adult service provision. Others are attending sports clubs at the weekends, where they can socialise with other children. Staff support them to maintain their ongoing relationships with families.

The manager is aware of the strengths in the home. She commented on the commitment of the staff to meet the children's needs. She has spent a great deal of time gathering the right quality of staff who are keen to learn and are committed to go out with the children, to participate in activities and to provide enjoyable experiences. The weaknesses are associated to the forming of a new team. The staff have had to learn a great deal very quickly: in particular, working together, understanding the processes within the home and providing consistency of care. The team has recently had a development day looking at the skill set within the staff group. This has helped them to understand each other's skills and to focus on providing regular routines for the children.

## 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 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 that 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 the 'Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards'.

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