

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	22/11/2016
Unique reference number	SC032163
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered manager	James Collins
Inspector	Jennifer Reed

Inspection date	22/11/2016
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 exceed 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

SC032163

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is outstanding because:

- The young people enjoy living in their home. The individual houses are purposely set up to provide comfortable, suitable homes where the whole environment is designed to promote the communication, well-being and participation of each young person.
- The care staff enable the young people to make significant and sustained progress in their personal, social and educational development.
- Staff demonstrate skill and determination in supporting the young people to better manage their challenging behaviours, helping to reduce their anxieties and to increase their safety.
- The young people's individuality is warmly regarded and respected by staff. Staff encourage the young people to make choices in their daily lives and support them to pursue their interests and enjoy their chosen activities.
- The staff team has an excellent understanding of the needs and abilities of the young people whom they care for. Staff work effectively in partnership with parents, professionals and other services to make sure that the young people receive a high standard of focused support and care and are protected.
- Staff are well trained, well supported and competent. The cohesive nature and structure of the staff team contributes to the effective implementation of the young people's individual care and support plans.
- The strong, inspirational leadership and management of this home underpin the excellent individual outcomes that the young people achieve. Staff strive to make, and are successful in making, a positive difference in the lives of each young person.

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(s) meet(s) 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 within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
<p>32: Fitness of workers</p> <p>The registered person must ensure that full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the employment of an individual in respect of each of the matters in Schedule 2. In particular, this refers to point 1 of Schedule 2, which states that proof of identity, including a recent photograph is required.</p> <p>(Regulation 32(3)(d))</p>	30/12/2016

Full report

Information about this children's home

This home is part of a range of services provided by a local authority. The home is registered to accommodate up to nine young people who have complex learning difficulties and disabilities.

This children's home provides long-term accommodation for the young people in the four distinct 'houses', sited within the home's building. The occupancy levels of each house are determined by the needs and the mix of the young people living in the home. Suitable equipment and adaptations are provided to meet the individual needs of each young person. The young people attend local special educational provision.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
10/11/2015	Interim	Improved effectiveness
12/05/2015	Full	Outstanding
16/02/2015	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
25/11/2014	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Outstanding
<p>The dedication and focus of the staff team to provide high-quality support and care to the young people contributes to the excellent progress that the young people make and their experience of living in the home. The outstanding quality of the home's individual care plans and the level of individualised care provided to the young people contribute significantly to their achievements. An independent reviewing officer commented, 'Young people are being so well looked after by the staff. I am really impressed by this home.' A parent said, 'My child lived in this home for seven years, and staff cared for them very well. I visited twice a week and had no concerns about how they were looked after.'</p> <p>Staff develop positive relationships with the young people to help them to feel safe and secure. Staff have an excellent understanding of each young person's needs and abilities and are competent in understanding their method of communication. A social worker said, 'Staff have a nice bond with the young person. They are fond of them and do not define them by their behaviour.'</p> <p>Excellent attention is given to meeting the young people's individual sensory needs, for example providing low stimulation in a bedroom, fitting a whirlpool bath, or providing a well-equipped sensory room for a young person to relax in. Staff understand what resources individual young people like to have to help to lessen their anxieties. Items such as blankets, helmets, particular toys or music are available in their homes for them to choose to use when they feel that they need them. The family room has been changed into a soft play room, which is very much enjoyed by some young people.</p> <p>The home contains four different houses where the young people live. Staff make sure that each house and the communal areas of the home look as much like a family home as they can, rather than a purpose-built care home. The houses are decorated, furnished and equipped to reflect and meet the young people's individual needs. Each house is different. For example, two houses have kitchens, which provide young people with opportunities to develop their practical independent living skills. The young people are involved in making their house their home. They can choose particular items and decor that they want; their bedrooms are very much 'their personal space'. One young person asked for a front door to be fitted to her house and this was done. Staff from other houses and visitors now ring the doorbell to gain entry. It is the young person's house now, and no longer 'a unit' within the home.</p> <p>The garden areas offer safe spaces where the young people can positively expend their energy, running around and using the outside play equipment. Some young</p>	

people enjoy the movement of the swings, which helps them to stay calm. In the garden areas, staff have painted tyres in bright colours and planted herbs and flowers, providing an inviting area that the young people want to go in. Staff support the young people in learning to garden. The young people sow seeds, dig earth and look after their growing vegetables. They like watering the plants and enjoy eating the produce. One young person particularly enjoyed his potatoes!

The young people enjoy taking part in a wide range of activities of their choice both in the home and in the local area. Staff encourage the young people to go out into the community. After school, the young people regularly go for walks, take drives in the home's vehicle, go to parks, go swimming and go shopping. During weekends and school holidays, staff arrange trips that interest the young people and individual holidays for those young people that enjoy such an event.

Staff help and support young people to try new things and increase their experiences. This year their home has gained a pet – a rabbit that lives in the centre garden in its hutch. The young people take turns to feed and look after the rabbit. Sometimes the rabbit is allowed into a house to run around and be petted for a short period of time, if the young people enjoy this experience.

Each young person has a memory box to keep their photographs and other special things in, to help them to gain an understanding of their childhood. The colours and designs of these beautiful boxes have been carefully chosen to appeal to individual children. The young people get pleasure out of looking at their photographs and mementoes and have a visual history of their lives.

Staff help the young people to keep an achievement folder. This contains photographic evidence and their Achievement Qualification Award (AQA) certificates, showing their progress and increasing abilities. Staff support young people in gaining their AQA awards. Every young person has gained some awards, with one young person having to date achieved over 70 certificates. These outstanding achievements are celebrated in the home. Some young people like their certificates to be displayed on walls in their houses; others have a special folder in which to keep them and they look at them when they want to. Their achievements increase their self-esteem and mastery of new skills.

Staff provide excellent support to young people as they grow up and leave their home to become young adults. When a young person moves into other living situations provided by adult services, staff work collaboratively with social workers and adult providers to manage this major change in the young person's life. Staff tell the young people social stories to help them to understand what is happening. Adult service workers are welcomed into the home to work alongside staff prior to the move. This helps the young person to get to know these new people, and the new staff to gain an understanding of the young person's care needs and abilities. Staff accompany the young person to visit their new home prior to their moving there. A parent reported, 'Staff were cooperative with the adult services provider whose staff worked with the team in the home to help the transition. My child is doing well in their new home.'

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Outstanding
<p>The comprehensive care plans, support plans, behaviour management strategies and risk assessments devised for the support of each individual young person guide staff in how best to look after them and keep them safe from harm. Staff show an exceptional and in-depth understanding of the needs, abilities and vulnerabilities of the young people whom they support and care for.</p> <p>Staff communicate with young people using their individual communication methods. These include Proloquo2go, a computerised symbol programme that young people access on their i-pads; picture exchange card system (PECS); an individual communication passport; and verbal prompts and scripts by staff to the young people. Staff also demonstrate an outstanding understanding of the meaning of each young person's non-verbal behaviours. Effective communication between staff and the young people offers individuals the opportunity to share their views and show or tell if they are unhappy or need help. This contributes to their protection. An independent reviewing officer said, 'The key worker demonstrated a very good understanding of the young person. They were able to tell me about the young person's needs, communication methods and abilities.'</p> <p>Staff are vigilant in their care of the young people. Staff understand the impact of the young people's medical difficulties on their lives and know how their medication assists them. Staff receive specialist training to ensure that they are able to respond appropriately to the young people's individual health needs and to ensure that their well-being is promoted.</p> <p>Satisfactory staffing ratios on each shift mean that each young person receives the level of supervision that they need to make sure that they are kept safe at all times. No young people have gone missing from this home or have become lost while in the community.</p> <p>Key workers are identified for each child and they coordinate the effective implementation of individual plans. The continuity of a core team of staff supporting each young person strengthens their knowledge of that individual and enhances staff expertise in helping them. The young people get to know the staff who look after them and they are used to the consistent care that they receive. This helps the young people to feel secure and minimises the uncertainty of any change in their daily routines.</p> <p>The safeguarding of the young people is rigorous in all aspects of this home's care</p>	

practices. Staff understand and work within the policies and protocols of the home, the local authority and the Local Safeguarding Children Board. The high awareness and actions of the staff team regarding the employment of 'whistle-blowing' procedures to report any concerns that they may have about the quality of care provided to vulnerable young people provides robust protection. Excellent communication between staff and parents, schools and professionals ensures that key information is shared, contributing to supporting and protecting the young people at all times.

Behaviour management monitoring within the home is exceptionally well completed. Managers and practice leads gather data from the comprehensive records kept for each young person, to identify trends, patterns and triggers for incidents of challenging behaviour. They evaluate the necessity of any restraint being undertaken to ensure that young people are protected.

Managers and staff also skilfully identify where positive changes in care practices can be made. They aim to reduce young people's anxieties and decrease the need for restraint as a response to ensuring the safety of the young people. The staff team works closely with the Swifts team, a community service working with children who have learning disabilities, to devise and implement effective behaviour management strategies for the staff to employ. These strategies are designed to guide staff in helping each young person to improve their self-regulation and better manage their feelings, decreasing the need for restraint. Some young people have made exceptional progress in their ability to deal with their anxieties, resulting in a significant decrease in the need for and level of restraint needed to protect them. A social worker commented, 'Staff openly discuss issues and come up with ideas and strategies. They are open to working with other professionals and consult with parents. They are not defensive about their work.'

Staff show a high level of confidence and skill in the use of restraint to support individuals to manage their anxieties and to prevent harm to themselves or others. The staff effectively manage young people's personal crises and episodes of very challenging behaviour. They employ low-level restraint holds, undertaken for only a very brief period of time, to protect the young people and help them to manage any unsafe or harming behaviour: for example head-banging, pulling hair or biting.

The physical environment of the home provides a safe place for the young people to live in. Regular health and safety, fire and utility checks are completed.

Managers rigorously adhere to the local authority's recruitment and selection procedures to ensure that vetting checks on prospective employees are undertaken. However, the local authority's procedures do not insist that a photograph of the employee is gained as a part of the identification process. Thus, if an applicant does not provide either a passport or driving licence as their forms of identification, a photograph of them is not obtained. Photographic identification is required by the legislation of the Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Outstanding
<p>The leadership and management of this home are outstanding. The registered manager has managed this home since November 1997. His substantial experience and good knowledge of working with young people who have disabilities underpins his strong and effective leadership of the staff team. The registered manager is well supported by senior managers in the local authority and in the home by its cohesive senior management team. This home delivers a child-centred service that strives to provide an exemplary standard of individualised care to young people who have disabilities.</p> <p>The registered manager shows an excellent understanding of the home's strengths and areas of competence, and the progress and experiences of the young people looked after. Action plans are in place to tackle identified aspects of the home's operation that require further development to continue to improve outcomes for the young people. The registered manager has a strong interest in keeping up to date with the latest evidence-based research and uses this information to drive forward the standard of care provided to the young people. His enthusiasm, commitment and collaborative approach encourage others in the development of innovative care for individual young people. The whole staff team is ambitious for the young people that they look after. Staff, in agreement with other professionals and parents, try new ways of working aimed at making positive differences to the young people's lives.</p> <p>The registered manager and senior management team are meticulous in their oversight of care practice, to ensure that every young person is well looked after and safe. They scrutinise records to assure themselves that young people's needs are appropriately responded to by all staff. They make sure that the young people receive the help and support that they may need when new behaviours or needs emerge.</p> <p>This home is well managed and organised. Effective systems are in place that are well understood, and the delegation of responsibilities within the staff team results in a well-run home. Staff take pride in undertaking their specific roles and accountabilities and they increase and develop their expertise and skills in particular areas of their work with the young people, for example helping young people to achieve national achievement qualification awards.</p> <p>The home has developed its own induction programme, adapted from the local authority's induction process and tailored to fit the needs of new employees working in this home. It is a comprehensive programme, which staff find valuable</p>	

in supporting them when they commence working in this home. Regular staff performance reviews, supervision, team meetings, house meetings and training support staff in undertaking their work with young people effectively. Staff morale is high. The team works well together and staff feel extremely well supported.

The home employs 52 members of staff who work within a range of contracted employment hours. These arrangements provide sufficient staffing levels for the home to meet the young people's needs. An independent reviewing officer said, 'There are a good amount of carers; the home is well staffed and it feels a safe environment.'

Staffing turnover in this large team impacts on the level of qualification in the home. Over the past 18-month period, 21 staff members have left, and 19 staff members have started working at the home. Currently, half of the staff team has gained an appropriate national qualification. The registered manager has made arrangements for a new training provider to commence working with the home, to hasten the progress of accredited training for all staff. The registered manager and a practice leader have recently completed the Training Assessment and Quality Assurance (TAQA) award, to enable them to support staff in the successful completion of their diploma level 3 award within given timescales. However, it is unlikely that all staff will gain the award, because some casual staff only work in the home during the school holidays and they are not available during the rest of the year to complete the level 3 national training award.

Positive working relationships exist between the home and parents, schools, other professionals and services. Strong partnership working is effective in providing good-quality and consistent care for the young people. Professionals emphasise partnership working as a strength of this home. They said, 'Staff have a very good relationship with the young person's parent,' and, 'Liaison between home and school has improved to join up plans to provide a continuity of care for the young person.'

The home and garden continue to be refurbished and improved to provide good-quality accommodation. They provide the young people with a pleasant, comfortable and safe environment to live in.

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 that 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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