

1247670

Registered provider: West Cumbria Care And Support (West House)

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is registered by a charitable organisation to provide care and accommodation under short-break arrangements for up to five children. The home is registered for children who have a learning disability.

Inspection dates: 9 to 10 August 2017

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	outstanding
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	outstanding
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	outstanding
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The children's home provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the children's home contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people who need help, protection and care.

Date of last inspection: not applicable

Overall judgement at last inspection: not applicable

Enforcement action since last inspection

None

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is outstanding because:

- The home provides a safe, warm and comfortable environment where young people feel completely safe and well cared for.
- Young people and their parents consistently say that they look forward to coming to this home for short breaks and they love the time they spend with staff.
- This short-break service offers young people access to a wide range of activities and new experiences. These help young people socialise, build positive self-esteem and confidence in their abilities.
- Staff promote a can-do attitude that ensures that young people are not defined by their disability.
- The home works in partnership with health, education and social care services to ensure that support is coordinated and successfully helps children and young people to achieve their full potential
- The home successfully supports young people to become as independent as they are able. This helps in ensuring a smooth transition towards adulthood.
- Parents and professionals expressed confidence in the home, reporting a consistently high standard of care and support that enhances young people's lives.
- Staff are effective in identifying and managing young people's risks. They are highly vigilant and familiar with processes to prioritise and promote their safety.
- Excellent arrangements for the safe transit, storage, handling and administration of medication provide confidence that children and young people's health and safety are of paramount importance.
- The registered manager is effective in his role, supporting his staff team and the home's continuous development. He has an excellent understanding of the home's strengths and drives to further develop the service.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
None – new registration		

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Staff show warmth and genuine interest in the children and young people they care for. Children and young people are happy about and look forward to coming to the short-break home. Here they enjoy a full range of activities, many of which they ordinarily wouldn't access at home. Staff are highly committed to making visits enjoyable and exciting for all who attend. Children and young people appreciate spending time with each other and staff, and so the service provides good opportunities for young people to socialise and have fun.

The home provides a safe and appropriately secure environment for children and young people to visit and have overnight stays. Parents feel reassured that the purpose-built home is designed and adapted to meet the needs of their children and young people. The property is homely, comfortable and well-maintained. One parent said, 'It's a home from home.' Another commented, 'It feels so welcoming. Staff welcome children and parents. Nothing is too much trouble. I always know he's going to have a good time, and I can go away and I don't have to worry.'

Children and young people are introduced to the home at their own pace to ensure that they feel safe and confident of the adults who are caring for them. For some, this will include spending some time with staff on an activity or coming to the home for a visit and tea before eventually staying overnight at the home. The home takes care to match children and young people during their short breaks. This enables staff to avoid having children and young people at the home that may be incompatible. Children and young people's arrangements take into account such factors as their preferences for staff and other young people they may already know from school. For some, this allows young people the opportunity to develop their friendships and spend time together. One parent commented, 'She is socialising more; she absolutely loves the staff. She has a massive smile when she gets her suitcase out. She really loves going.'

Staff share excellent relationships with children and young people. Staff are nurturing in their approach, tactile and also regularly use humour to gain young people's interest and cooperation to try something new. Children and young people are encouraged to make their own personal choices during their short breaks. This can be anything from what bedding they want in their bedroom to whether they have a bath or a shower, and who may help them. Although staff often have to assist young people with personal care tasks, they are committed to respecting the young person's right to privacy, ensuring that their dignity is maintained.

Children and young people are not defined by their disability. Staff encourage them to take part in a wide range of activities enjoyed by other children and young people of their age. Staff challenge perceived barriers and promote a 'can-do' attitude. This supports children and young people effectively in getting out and about in their community and enjoying new activities and experiences. For example, one child with mobility issues has thoroughly enjoyed going to a trampolining centre. Another has

enjoyed her first trip to the cinema despite having some anxieties about this. Her mother commented, 'She loved it. She previously wouldn't have gone as she didn't like the noise and the dark.'

The provider also operates outreach and youth services that complement the support offered by the short-break service. A number of staff work both in the home and across the outreach services, providing young people with the opportunity to get to know staff as a result of the outreach service before accessing short breaks. This provides significant continuity for young people who make use of both services. A social worker said, 'Integration of the outreach service and the short-break service is definitely good. It is comforting to young people.'

Children and young people are at the centre of all the home's planning. Individual short-break plans are unique to each child and young person. They clearly detail their individual needs, abilities and care requirements, ensuring that staff have a thorough knowledge of them all. Children and young people are encouraged to contribute to these plans to ensure that their wishes and preferences are taken into account and understood.

Staff work in close partnership with parents and other professionals to help understand young people's needs. They are familiar with alternative communication methods that individual children and young people may use. These are well documented as part of the short-break planning and ensure the inclusion of those who experience difficulty in vocalising their wishes.

While parents retain responsibility for their children and young people's health and education, the home maintains regular communication with school and health providers. This partnership approach ensures good coordination of services to ensure that children and young people are helped effectively to reach their full potential.

The home fulfils a significant role in helping those young people who are moving towards adulthood. Individual support and learning opportunities are planned and provided in accordance with young people's personal abilities. For example, for some young people this may be helping them prepare a drink or snack, while for others this may include going out for meals, using public transport or shopping. These are often new and exciting experiences. Staff are successful in optimising young people's independence, helping them towards a smooth transition to adulthood.

Parents and social workers value the service and express considerable confidence in the home and its staff. A social worker said, 'We have a good relationship with staff and there is good open communication.' Parents particularly praised staff. One said, 'It's lovely, I can't fault them. Staff are fantastic. It is so relaxed and he is so happy here.'

How well children and young people are helped and protected: outstanding

Young people are kept safe in this home. High staffing levels ensure that young people are supervised and supported effectively at all times. Young people's individual risk

assessments are comprehensive and kept up to date to ensure that staff have a full and accurate understanding of each young person's particular vulnerabilities and circumstances that may compromise their safety. Staff participate in a range of safeguarding and health-specific training to ensure that they have the knowledge and confidence to keep young people safe.

Staff take care to assess the compatibility of young people when planning visits and overnight stays at the home. Young people's many and complex behaviours are clearly documented, enabling staff to have a good understanding of routines and behaviours that may be exhibited and what may trigger those behaviours. The detail provided in risk assessments ensures that staff know exactly how to successfully manage the range of young people's behaviours, both within and outside the home when engaging in activities.

Some young people with verbal communication were able to tell the inspector how safe they felt at the home. One young person commented, 'Staff are very kind and trustworthy. I definitely feel safe, no one can get in unless staff open the front door. It's good, very good. They work hard to make all young people comfortable and safe.' Parents expressed immense confidence in staff skill and knowledge of their young person.

Arrangements within the home ensure that young people are physically well protected and safe from any potential hazards. For example, potentially harmful cleaning materials are safely stored and cannot be accessed by young people. Staff follow the home's procedure and protocol for safely storing and administering medication. As a minimum, all staff are fully trained in safe medication management and administration and emergency first aid. The home has a clear protocol and stringent arrangements for the safe transit of medication between home and school. Together these measures promote young people's safety.

Young people receive regular instruction about what they should do if there is a fire or an emergency at the home. Staff ensure that young people regularly practise how to leave the home safely in the event of an emergency. Staff are suitably trained in fire safety and their competency is frequently assessed by management. Staff are familiar with the use of fire prevention equipment and conduct regular checks and audits to ensure that alarms and emergency lighting remain in good working order.

There have been no incidents of children going missing from this home. However, staff are fully conversant with the home's missing from home policy, and understand the specific arrangements for each young person should they go missing. In the event of such an occurrence, the home has individual profile information already prepared to assist the police in achieving a quick and safe return to the home.

The home is appropriately secure; the main door remains locked to ensure that no one gains access to the property without staff invitation. The home's recruitment and selection arrangements are robust to ensure that only staff who are deemed safe to work with children are employed. Parents feel very reassured by the measures taken to

safeguard their children. Parents spoken to were unanimous in their view that their children were consistently safe and well protected.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The provider registered this home with Ofsted in December 2016, having taken over responsibility for the service from the previous provider. The registered manager has considerable experience in working with children, young people and adults with learning disabilities and complex health needs. He has a thorough knowledge and understanding of the needs of the individual children and young people who are currently accessing this service. He is ably supported by two senior care officers who undertake management support roles within the provider's outreach service as well as this short-break home.

The registered manager is committed to removing those barriers that have previously hindered young people's ability to access services and activities that they may enjoy. His enthusiasm and commitment is shared by his staff team. Together, they successfully challenge attitudes and seek meaningful ways to ensure that they are given equitable opportunities that will support their learning and development as well as promote their inclusion in their community.

The changes that the short-break service can influence can sometimes appear quite small, but they can make a huge impact in young people's lives. For example, the staff have worked in cooperation with education to support one young person in using a new flexible cognitive behavioural therapy approach that has helped her deal with feelings of fear, anger and anxiety. As a result, she has been able to develop greater social and emotional resilience. The young person was able to tell the inspector, 'I am coping really well now. I have angel and fairy cards and they tell me how to keep calm. I shrug my shoulders and I feel less anxious.'

The staff team work in good cooperation with the registered manager. They can identify lessons learned from some early mistakes that they feel they made in matching young people when they first took over running the short-break service. They can clearly identify their strengths in working with children and young people and are passionate about further developing their service, taking account of young people's and their parents' views.

The provider ensures that staff have good access to a range of training and development opportunities. Staff say that they feel well supported and confident in their roles. They identify regular staff meetings and formal supervision sessions as being supportive in planning their work with children and young people.

Ongoing staff development is identified as key to the continuous development of the home. The majority of care staff possess a level 3 qualification in caring for children and young people. Those who have more recently joined the team are working towards their qualification. The registered manager is also enrolled on and pursuing his level 5 qualification in leadership and management.

The home is operating in accordance with its statement of purpose, ensuring that children and young people who have learning disabilities and their families receive high quality, coordinated care which is based on assessed needs, promotes social inclusion and helps children to reach their full potential by developing life skills. Young people's records are highly detailed and well maintained, identifying their achievements, good progress and future goals.

There have not been any significant events that the home has needed to notify Ofsted about. The registered manager and his seniors actively audit and review all work undertaken at the home and have daily oversight of the day-to-day arrangements within the home. Ofsted receives regular reports from the home's independent visitor which illustrate effective external monitoring of the home's operation.

The home ensures that parents are kept fully informed during and after young people's breaks. Pre-visit discussions with family are also considered good practice to ensure that staff have the most current and relevant information about the child or young person's circumstances. This also provides families with a good opportunity to raise any issues in advance of the visit. Parents speak very highly of the service and of the staff they deal with, one describing the service as 'a lifeline to families'.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and 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.

Using the 'Social care common inspection framework', this inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, 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'.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 1247670

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: West Cumbria Care And Support (West House)

Registered provider address: West Cumbria Care And Support, 26 Stanley Street,
Workington CA14 2JD

Responsible individual: Catherine Parker

Registered manager: Mark Swanston

Inspector

Gillian Walters, social care inspector

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