

SC490136

Registered provider: EnhanceAble

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

EnhanceAble, a registered charity and not-for-profit organisation, commissioned by Achieving for Children (on behalf of the local authority), provides a short-break service for up to two children at a time in this home. It provides a service for children who have learning disabilities, emotional and/or behavioural difficulties, sensory impairment and/or physical disabilities.

Inspection dates: 12 to 13 October 2017

Overall experiences and progress of children and children, taking into account **outstanding**

How well children and children are helped and protected **outstanding**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **good**

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 children who need help, protection and care.

Date of last inspection: 30 March 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: sustained effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection:

None

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is outstanding because:

- Children receive a great short-breaks service. They give their views and get to choose bedrooms, decor, meals and activities.
- High quality assessments and preparation for each short break help children settle in very well and enjoy the experience.
- Children and families highly value this service. One parent described it as, 'Fantastic – really life-changing for us as a family.'
- Staff knowledge of and ability to meet children's needs are exceptional.
- Children are at the centre of everything in this 'home-from-home'.
- Consistent care contributes to children's high quality experiences and exceptional progress.
- Staff understand the risks to children's safety and manage these very well.
- Safety and protection take high priority.
- Children experience an excellent range of activities.
- Parents regard this home as a 'valuable and trustworthy' resource.
- Strong and consistent leadership and management drive improvement.
- There is a welcoming, positive and friendly atmosphere in the home.
- The home's independent visitor states: 'The home is extremely well run and children are achieving very good outcomes.'
- Surveys from 16 parents, staff and professionals are all highly positive and have no suggestions about how this service could improve.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
30/03/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
16/08/2016	Full	Good
04/03/2016	Full	Requires improvement

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

Recommendations

- Make sure the registered person has a workforce plan which includes all elements of the quality standard. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.8)
- For children's homes to be nurturing and supportive environments that meet the needs of their children, they will, in most cases, be homely, domestic environments. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and children: outstanding

The home delivers excellent standards and a very high quality of care to children and their families. Since registration two years ago, this has been a continually improving service. The same group of children has used the home for short breaks. They have experienced exceptionally consistent care and stability as there has been little change to the staff and none at all in the management team. There is a genuine warmth between the children and the staff who want to make a difference in their lives. A parent said they, 'really value the service. It is so important for autistic children not to experience change and the staff are a constant in their lives.'

Children make exceptional progress from their starting points and within their own capabilities. Staff help children to fulfil their potential. Steps may be small but very significant in improving each child's life and well-being. For example, those who have had very restricted dietary intakes are now eating a broad diet, including a wide range of fruits and vegetables, which benefits their general health. Some have improved mobility. One child 'can now walk with support from one room to another'. Some children have improved play skills, such as using different objects and toys to self-stimulate their sensory needs. Improved personal skills, such as learning to use the toilet or managing personal care, have helped children to feel less reliant on adults.

Staff regularly seek children's views and act on these. Some children using the service are non-verbal. Staff use different forms of communication, including Makaton and the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS), to ensure that children express their preferences and choices during their stay. Staff undertake key-work sessions and support children to complete feedback forms using pictures and symbols. Staff seek regular feedback from parents and carers to develop the service around the children's needs. Because communication between staff and children is effective and staff focus is on children's needs, behaviour has improved dramatically and incidents of any challenging behaviour are now very rare. Children feel calmer and their well-being improves as a result.

Children's communication skills improve significantly. Due to consistent staffing, children build good relationships with them. A parent said their child 'is always pleased to see the staff and with his limited language, share things with them'. Some children are now less reliant on electronic media and readily join in with activities, such as singing and signing Makaton. A few now use PECS to choose activities in the community.

Building very positive, warm relationships has been central in helping children to feel settled and trusting of staff. As a result, children have developed the confidence to stay away from their families, they look forward to attending and greatly enjoy the experiences on offer. Families say that because they know their children are safe, happy and enjoy their stay, they can also enjoy a short break and feel refreshed when resuming care of their child. One parent said, 'It is literally a lifesaver for our family; our child is extremely challenging and staff manage them with care and empathy, meaning that we can actually relax with our other children, knowing that they are having fun. They love going and we are so grateful for that!'

The home is unusual in being small, accommodating only two children at a time. Staff know the children exceptionally well. Staff incorporate current guidance into their practice, for example about caring for children with autistic spectrum disorder. Staff take care to make sure that those children staying in the home have compatible needs. Together with parents, staff define targets for children to achieve. They praise children's efforts and reward their achievements, for example with certificates that children then take to school for 'show and tell'. As a result, children's confidence and self-esteem improve. For some children, social interaction with their peers greatly improves and they can now tolerate other children and share activities, such as playing a game or watching a DVD together. A parent said, 'This is the only place outside of school where my child can meet others.' Another parent said they were amazed that their child had 'held a child's hand to watch TV'.

Children enjoy a very child-centred environment that is focused on their needs. Children look forward to attending and settle in quickly upon arrival. A parent said, 'My son loves going. He cannot verbally communicate but reaches for his "respite-stay bag" often and will not let go of it. He has opportunities for trips and things he enjoys doing – the days are planned around his likes.'

All children are encouraged to be as independent as possible. Skills developed during their short breaks have transformed their lives at home and at school. Some children now have greatly increased confidence when going out in the community and even when crossing roads. Others can now perform household chores, such as loading a dishwasher, helping to make dinner or making their bed. One parent praised staff for developing their child's independence skills: 'This has been a real strength since she started the short breaks and has carried over into home, too. For example, she now helps prepare food and tidies up, which she didn't before.'

This is a very active home. Children fully access an excellent range of activities in the local and wider community, irrespective of their disabilities, including a wide range of

cultural and religious celebrations. A parent said the staff 'don't let the children sit around!' Children enjoy new activities, which cater for their individual interests. For example, some enjoy long walks in the countryside or trips to theme parks, the theatre, ice-skating, water parks or cinema. A parent commented: 'My child participates in a variety of activities that I would find hard to manage doing with her at home.'

Staff manage children's transitions exceptionally well. Careful planning helps staff support children very well at times of change and reduces anxiety. As children have high needs, pre- and post-visit conversations with families help keep everyone informed of any changes in children's well-being. Staff consult parents about planned activities to ensure that they are supportive of them. Recently, a child moved on to adult services. Staff went the 'extra mile' to help minimise their anxiety and help them to settle in the new placement.

Staff prepare children well for bedtime with routines they enjoy. Excellent use is made of visual timetables to help children know when an activity will end and when it is bedtime. Some children have improved sleeping habits as a result of staff introducing routines to reduce their anxiety, such as using timers, nightlights and reading bedtime stories. In one case, a parent cannot believe that their child now sleeps through the night and therefore the family has uninterrupted sleep and a better quality of life.

How well children and children are helped and protected: outstanding

A high level of vigilance has helped the staff maintain an excellent record of protecting children and keeping them safe. Staff build up positive relationships with children and their families during the admission process. Prior to staying overnight, children are carefully prepared, for example with short visits until they are ready to stay. This reduces children's stress and anxiety and encourages the placement's success.

Meticulous risk assessment prior to any short break ensures that staff understand the risks and needs of each child. Parents, children and school staff contribute to these risk assessments, which include strategies for managing behaviours and certain triggers. This in-depth approach directly informs staff practice, which helps to keep children safe.

The home has an excellent track record of providing a very safe environment for children. In surveys, all parents 'strongly agree' that their child is safe in the home. Staff have developed strategies that promote the children's emotional management and resilience. The staff are committed to the children and are aspirational in their approach. They ensure that the children experience care and support in a warm and nurturing manner. A parent said their child has 'always been safe there because the staff are so good and know her needs very well'. The staffing ratios are high, including when outside the home on activities. Staff provide clear boundaries for children, helping them to feel secure.

Staff manage situations and behaviour very safely and effectively. Because the staff know children extremely well, they are able to interpret any signs of emotional distress or anxiety and reduce this accordingly, for example by distracting and engaging them. A

parent said, 'My child has severe autism and challenging behaviour, and they are very in-tune with how she is feeling as they have got to know her very well. They are firm but fair, which is what she needs. She now rarely has any outbursts at respite and if she gets upset they know how to distract and manage her, as well as keeping us informed.' Although trained to restrain children, staff have not done so, nor applied any sanctions, rather using their de-escalation skills and their knowledge of children's needs to manage behaviour very well.

Staff receive appropriate training in safeguarding and child protection, understanding current research and issues affecting children's safety. This includes the particular vulnerability of children who have profound disabilities, the risks of radicalisation, female genital mutilation and child sexual exploitation. Staff document any injuries, scratches or concerns about children, including body map images, sharing information effectively with parents and professionals to promote children's safety. Staff provide families with safeguarding information through the home's statement of purpose and children's guide.

An accessible complaints policy is available to parents and carers. The home has not received any complaints since the last full inspection. Parents comment on the registered manager's ability to listen to their views and ensure effective information sharing. They value this aspect of the highly respected service.

Children have not gone missing from the home, or while on trips out, as staff are vigilant, they provide individual care and an increased staff ratio. Staff have a good missing from care policy as well as risk assessment, which includes the protocol to follow should a child go missing. This high level of attention to detail has ensured the exemplary record of no child going missing.

Staff manage medication very safely. Thorough training enables the staff to manage the needs of children with quite complex medical and health conditions. A member of staff said, 'We know the children so well we are all very confident with protocols and procedures.'

The physical environment is safe and protects children from harm. Staff prioritise fire safety, with regular drills and equipment checks. Each child has an evacuation plan for staff to follow in the event of an emergency, which takes into account their individual needs and how they may react in such situations.

Careful recruitment ensures that before staff start work with vulnerable children, they are thoroughly checked to determine their suitability. This helps to protect children from unsuitable people.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager is proactive in developing the service and is committed to improving children's outcomes. She is a highly competent and able manager. A member of staff commented, 'Great management – it's easy to ask for advice.' Leaders, managers and the staff team are strong advocates for children's rights. They advocate

for children and their families and support their diverse needs.

The registered manager understands the strengths and weaknesses of the service. Her thorough reviews of the service assist its continuous improvement, as do the regular reviews by an independent visitor.

Most staff have worked in services for children who have disabilities for many years, acquiring the necessary skills. Staff value the charity's 'excellent training', which helps them to support children who have complex needs. The registered manager has written a development plan for the service, but this does not contain all of the required information. However, this has no impact on the service.

Staff are enthusiastic and positive about looking after the children. They are supportive of each other and recognise each other's skills. They receive appropriate supervision, appraisal and training to support them in their role. Staff said, 'We're all such a happy team here.' A parent said, 'The home is very well run by knowledgeable staff who are passionate about their job. They clearly genuinely care about our children. I always feel relieved knowing my child is in their hands.'

As the home was due to close earlier in the year, some staff could not progress with work towards achieving level 3 qualifications and the registered manager could not proceed with gaining a level 5 qualification. The home has now been granted an extension to its closure date. The manager and some staff are now looking to resume gaining appropriate qualifications. For the same reason, redecoration of the building has not taken place. The home is comfortable but a few areas are marked and would benefit from redecoration.

An insistence on clear plans and guidance on individual children before they stay in the home supports staff to work effectively with them. Staff work effectively with other professionals in children's best interests and to improve their outcomes.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of children. They watched how professional staff work with children and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children 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 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: SC490136

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: EnhanceAble

Registered provider address: 13 Geneva Road, Kingston-upon-Thames, Surrey KT1 2TW

Responsible individual: Julie Hagarty

Registered manager: Justine Flood

Inspector

Jacqueline Graves, social care regulatory inspector

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