

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	06/07/2016
Unique reference number	SC034940
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered person	City of York Council
Registered person address	City of York Council, PO Box 31, York, YO1 7DU

Responsible individual	Eoin Rush
Registered manager	Catherine Wood
Inspector	Michele Hargan

Inspection date	06/07/2016
Previous inspection judgement	Sustained effectiveness
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.	
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good

SC034940

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- Children and young people's short stays are meaningful and enrich their lives.
- Staff are very effective at working with parents and other professionals.
- Oversight of healthcare tasks by the in-house nurse ensures that staff are trained and assessed as competent to carry these out.
- Children's and young people's transition to the home is carefully paced and managed.
- Similarly, young people who move on from the service and their parents or carers receive good support.
- Children and young people receive a quality of care that aids their overall development and progress.
- A significant strength of the staff is their ability to build trusting relationships with children and young people.

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 recommendations:

- Children's home staff should take reasonable precautions and make informed professional judgements based on the individual child's needs and developmental stage about when to allow a child to take a particular risk or follow a particular course of action. Staff should discuss the decision with the child's placing authority where appropriate. If a child makes a choice that would place them or another person at significant risk of harm, staff should assist them to understand the risks and manage their risk-taking behaviour to keep themselves and others safe. In particular, ensure that risk assessments are shared with and signed by social workers ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 42, paragraph 9.7).
- The registered person should have a workforce plan, including the processes and agreed timescales for staff to achieve induction, probation and any core training (such as safeguarding, health and safety, and mandatory qualifications); detail the process for managing and improving poor performance; and detail the process and timescales for supervision of practice. The plan should be updated to include any new training and qualifications completed by staff while working at the home, and used to record the ongoing training and continuing professional development needs of staff, including the home's manager, and in particular that this is reflected within the home's statement of purpose ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.8).
- Contingency plans should be prepared in the event of a shortfall in staffing levels. If it is likely that there might only be one member of staff on duty at any time, the manager should make a formal assessment of the implications for children's care, including any likely risks. This assessment should be recorded and available for inspection by Ofsted and placing authorities. In particular, this should make clear the arrangements to be followed in the event of a significant shortfall of staff ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 54, paragraph 10.18).
- The registered person is responsible for ensuring that all staff consistently follow the home's policies and procedures for the benefit of the children in the home's care. Everyone working at the home must understand their roles and responsibilities and what they are authorised to decide on their own initiative. There should be clear lines of accountability. Each home must have clear arrangements in place to maintain effective management when the manager is absent, off duty or on leave, and in particular that a system is established to update the home's policies and procedures, making clear how

staff are to be informed of any updates regarding these ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 54, paragraph 10.20).

- The registered person is responsible for maintaining good employment practice. They must ensure that recruitment, supervision and performance management of staff safeguards children and minimises potential risks to them. In particular devise a proforma that makes clear the outcome of reference verification ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.1).

Full report

Information about this children's home

The home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to eight children with learning disabilities. It is owned and operated by a local authority.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
29/01/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
14/10/2015	Full	Good
30/03/2015	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
19/12/2014	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
<p>The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are</p>	<p>Good</p>
<p>Staff help children and young people to make meaningful progress underpinned by effective communication. Staff understand what children and young people demonstrate about their needs through their behaviour. They provide reassuring responses that help them feel relaxed so that they can enjoy their short stay. A parent said, 'They are always looking to identify opportunities for my daughter to take part in they understand that she can be impulsive and they are one-step ahead.'</p> <p>Sensitive care enables children and young people to take part in a varied range of in-house and community activities, improving their overall development. A member of staff said, 'The young person has started to write down what he wants; he can say whether he wants to go or stay when we ask him about outings.' A social worker said, 'It's a massive improvement that he can sit with other children and is calm.' A parent said, 'He loves trains and the staff are planning on taking him on a train journey.'</p> <p>Staff contribute to children and young people's educational needs by working closely with parents and schools. This means placement plans reflect their overall needs, helping to maximise their potential for learning. A headteacher said, 'From our point of view the home is one of the best attendees at meetings; they are very focused on outcomes and want to support young people in whatever way that might be'.</p> <p>Staff inspire parents and professionals with confidence about the care and support provided. This is because staff are skilled at fostering good relationships with children and young people. In an Ofsted survey, a parent said, 'I know my child is in a safe environment where they are respected, well cared for, have their needs met [and] are happy and having fun. It will never be as good as being [at] home but it's the closest thing.'</p> <p>Careful planning and effective joint working with parents, social workers, and staff in other settings mean that children and young people experience a stress-free introduction to the home. A parent said, 'They let him choose his own room and they kept that room for him so it's those extra little touches that make a difference.' Similarly, when a young person is ready to move on from the home, this considered approach makes the transition as relaxed as possible. A member of staff, talking about supporting transition, said, 'Me and the key worker stayed close to where the young person was going. We thought it was important that he had</p>	

support with bedtime routines. We got good feedback from the young person's mum and staff at the home about how helpful this was.'

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
<p>A system is now in place to assess staff competency in administering aspects of healthcare that some children and young people require, for instance when a child's or young person's nutritional needs are met via a feeding tube. A nurse based at the home undertakes training with staff, resulting in increased understanding and a more consistent approach to providing these elements of care. A recently developed resource pack, now provides a useful reference for staff. This approach helps them to maintain their skills, ensures their accountability and promotes safe care practice. Talking about the written guidance now in place, a member of staff said, 'We improved the format so staff can see at a glance what they need to check.'</p> <p>Thorough recruitment practices are in place. This means that only staff who are suitable are appointed to care for young people. While references for prospective staff are verified by the home's manager, the details of these are not clear. This omission is a missed opportunity to gain further understanding and to clarify the extent of the applicant's experiences.</p> <p>Regular communication between staff and with parents and professionals about the needs of children and young people takes place. At the beginning and end of shifts, a meaningful discussion takes place so that staff responsible for taking over the care of children and young people are well informed. This promotes safe care practice, continuity and helps to reduce young people's anxieties at times of transition. Similarly, systems are well embedded so that parents and carers are clear that their children's medication is safely administered. A parent said, 'We went through all of the paperwork, consents, medication forms – the procedures are very clear.'</p> <p>Staff use restraint as a last resort to keep a child or young person and others safe. In doing so, staff act on advice and guidance from the child and adolescent mental health service, when agreeing plans about the best course of action to take. This means that children and young people receive responses aimed at helping them develop safer ways of expressing difficult feelings.</p> <p>A member of staff is now qualified to deliver training in moving and handling. As a</p>	

result, written guidance about how to use moving and handling equipment, including slings, to aid young people with reduced mobility is in place. This ensures that children and young people receive individualised care that is consistent with their needs when changing position and with bathing. This promotes safer care practice and instils confidence that all staff are effectively able to meet these particular aspects of children’s and young people’s care.

The home provides a good level of care and because of this is held in high regard by parents and professionals alike. Children and young people do not go missing, and there are no concerns regarding child sexual exploitation or complaints about staff conduct. While the likelihood of these occurrences are low, staff remain alert to the vulnerabilities of children and young people and understand their responsibilities to pass on any safeguarding concerns.

Previous recommendations to improve risk assessments and behaviour support plans are now achieved. As a result, these are now individualised, reflecting each young person’s needs. These documents now focus on how to recognise and reinforce positive behaviour, helping to promote children’s and young people’s social skills. These plans are routinely shared with parents but not with social workers. This means that social workers are not kept up to date with what staff do to keep children and young people safe. A social worker said, ‘I don’t usually get them, but they are available, so the information can be shared with new providers.’

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good
<p>The home’s manager is suitably qualified and very experienced, and has been in post since 2007. This person is a good role model for staff and professionals who also has strong leadership skills and is genuinely committed to improving the lives of vulnerable children and young people. A social worker said, ‘Staff overall have been brilliant [and] they are sensitive to parents’ situations. They are not afraid to say when something is not right for a young person [and] they say “no” when necessary if a young person is not compatible with other young people.’</p> <p>Staff are highly experienced and supportive of each other. Many are long serving, resulting in low staff turnover. Similarly, an experienced and consistent bank of relief staff supplement the staff team at times of leave and sickness. However, a written contingency plan is not in place in the event of any difficulty with these present arrangements, as highlighted on one recent occasion. While this situation was managed without compromising children and young people in any way, the lack of a clear plan about what to do in the event of any future shortfall increases the likelihood of future disruption. A member of staff said, ‘Young people always receive one-to-one support – we are all very flexible; we have never had to cancel</p>	

a stay.'

Staff receive supervision that promotes reflective, child-focused care practice and a supportive team culture. This ensures that staff are accountable for their actions and proactive in their responses. This provides clear guidance to staff about their responsibilities.

Regular staff meetings focus on the needs of children and young people. For example, the introduction of children and young people to the home and young people moving on from the home are both carefully considered. This ensures that all relevant information is shared and understood by everyone concerned. In support of this, staff use pictorial aids known as narrative stories to help young people prepare for visits to new places. This increases the likelihood of a successful move.

Clear written information to help parents and carers understand how their child is welcomed and cared for is now in place. This helpful booklet outlines what the home does to keep children and young people safe. This includes obtaining appropriate consents to administer medication and to enable children's and young people's participation in activities.

Continued investment in the furnishings and fabric of the building and maintenance ensure that children and young people enjoy short stays in good-quality accommodation. In-house activities are on hand throughout the home, providing meaningful pastimes. Pupils from a local school complete an annual project to improve the home's garden areas. This latest effort has resulted in further bespoke play equipment being available to children and young people. A member of staff said, 'They've built an igloo out of milk bottles.' A parent said, 'The garden is great – my child loves to be outside.'

Reports completed by an independent visitor to the home now make clear this person's opinion that children and young people are safeguarded and that their welfare is promoted. An independent professional said, 'I am much more interested in understanding what staff do and how they consult young people than in just looking at everything that is written down.' Ensuring regular and rigorous oversight by an experienced person interested in what staff do enables choices, and respects and promotes young people's rights.

Further information is now included within the home's statement of purpose, meeting a previous requirement. The inclusion of this additional information now makes clear how the home: meets children's and young people's healthcare needs; manages emergency admissions; and when necessary promotes contact. This means that those who use the home are fully informed about how children's and young people's needs are met. However, this document does not demonstrate the home's plan for developing staff and supporting anyone needing additional assistance. This means that those who place children and young people are not

clear about how the continuing professional development of staff are assured.

The process for ensuring how policies and procedures are reviewed and remain up to date is unclear. Lack of an established system for this undermines induction training for new staff and means that current procedures are not available for existing staff to refer to.

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 the '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 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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