

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	18/11/2016
Unique reference number	SC059203
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered person	Northumberland County Council
Registered person address	County Hall, Morpeth, Northumberland NE61 2EF
Responsible individual	John Young
Registered manager	Susan Ghulam
Inspector	Colin Imrie

Inspection date	18/11/2016
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

SC059203

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is outstanding because:

- The leadership and management are excellent. The registered manager is very experienced and takes great care in all aspects of her work. She is skilled, knowledgeable and confident. She has high expectations of her staff team and is an excellent role model to them. Most of all, she has very high aspirations for all the children and young people who come to the home for short breaks.
- The staff team is extremely child-focused. Every aspect of the work revolves around giving the children and young people the best experience. Every child and young person has one or more goals that have been agreed with them and their parents and carers and these goals are woven into all the activities that they participate in throughout their stay.
- The children and young people make very good and often exceptional progress. Many of the children and young people achieve significant targets and milestones at the home and are often able to transfer these new skills and abilities back into their home environment. These are often exceptional outcomes.
- The staff are meticulous in their planning. Situations are thoroughly thought through, assessed and planned and this means that the children and young people are kept extremely safe. There have been no incidents of concern at all in the year since the previous full inspection.
- Staff take great care to work closely with parents and carers. They are consulted at all times and are part of the planning process and the risk assessment process. The children and young people are also consulted over every aspect of their short breaks. They are part of the planning process and are able to contribute to the planning of activities, menus, trips out and the day-to-day running of the home.
- The staff are nurturing and the quality of the care is high at all times. The staff do encourage the children and young people to try new activities and new experiences and this encouragement brings about significant progress for many of the children and young people. In trying new activities and experiences, they not only achieve well but their confidence is built, their skills are enhanced, their self-esteem is raised and their resilience and independence skills are enhanced. Much of the work at the home is carried out in small groups and this experience enhances the opportunity for children and young people to increase their social skills and confidence in social situations.

Full report

Information about this children's home

The home is run by a local authority and is registered for the short-break care and accommodation of up to six children with learning disabilities.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
24/03/2016	Interim	Improved effectiveness
09/10/2015	Full	Outstanding
27/03/2015	Interim	Improved effectiveness
31/01/2015	Full	Outstanding

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
<p>The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are</p>	<p>Outstanding</p>
<p>The home is small and the service only offers short breaks to a small number of children and young people. The service is only open at weekends, from after school on Fridays through to Monday mornings. The statement of purpose outlines the aims and objectives clearly and these are carried out appropriately.</p> <p>The staff succeed in offering exceptional levels of care and the children and young people not only have a very enjoyable experience but usually make very good and sometimes exceptional progress.</p> <p>When the inspector spoke to a number of parents and carers they all described how much their children enjoyed attending the short breaks. One parent said, 'He always comes back full of beans. He is always full of what he has done when he returns.' Another parent said, 'He loves it there. He gets really excited when he knows he is going.' One other parent said, 'If I ever ask her if she wants three nights there, she always says four nights or five nights. She skips to the car when she is going there.'</p> <p>These and other parents were equally enthusiastic about their views on the home and the work carried out there. They had comments such as 'absolutely amazing', 'absolutely fantastic', 'absolutely brilliant', 'out of this world', 'they go above and beyond' and 'I cannot speak highly enough of them'. Social workers who had placed children there were also very complimentary about the standards of care and about the work being done.</p> <p>While the inspector was present, one young person rushed into the home after arriving with their parent. They were so excited that they forgot to say goodbye to their parent and had to be reminded to do this by the staff member greeting them. During the inspection, all the young people were excited. They were looking forward to the local town Christmas lights switch on and to other Christmas-related activities. They were able to tell the inspector some of their favourite activities and show many photographs from other activities that they had participated in.</p> <p>There are excellent relationships between the staff and the children and young people. Staff take time to plan the short breaks thoroughly with parents and carers and with the children and young people. Goals and targets are agreed and set and these are woven into every aspect of the short breaks. One of the real strengths of the service is that staff know every child or young person very well and they are able to adapt every activity to ensure it includes opportunities for them to practice skills that are important to their goals and targets. One young person has a target to become more independent around food preparation and this is broken down into many smaller steps which are practiced at many points through the day. These include shopping, choosing, planning, hygiene, preparation, cooking, cleaning up,</p>	

storage and other skills.

The care plans are very individual and because of the high levels of supervision and commitment of the staff a great deal is accomplished in a short space of time. This is probably the aspect of care that is most exceptional. The staff are very child-focused, they take time, particularly in their handovers, to plan thoroughly and take time to ensure that every child or young person gets just what they need. Because of the thoroughness and dedication, children and young people make very good progress. One young person started to talk at the home when they had not talked before, another started to use the toilet when they had not at home and another started sleeping in their own room and transferred this skill back to their home environment. The list of significant achievements such as these goes on and on.

All of the children and young people are working on increasing their independence skills and most make very good progress here. However, the increase in confidence and resilience gained from their experiences here is equally important.

The staff communicate in many ways with the children and young people and make great efforts to ensure that this is as good as possible. They have designed picture boards with the children and young people to display activities planned and staff on duty. The children's guide is written in symbols and staff are trained in sign language and Makaton.

The staff always involve the children and young people in as much activity as possible. After arriving on a Friday evening, they have tea as a group and discuss what they want to do for the weekend. Activities are chosen and menus planned. The group then goes out shopping for the weekend supplies and then on to any planned evening activity. The staff and children and young people are adventurous and go on a wide variety of trips and activities. This is usually undertaken as a group so that the social aspect of the short break is maximised. Everyone gets to take part in the decision making and gets a choice but also has to accept that others have a choice as well. This works very well and again is an opportunity to enhance social skills and the understanding of the wants and needs of others. The young people's group meeting discusses a wide range of topics including their achievements and this is positive.

The staff liaise well with schools and other services and keep in close contact with other professionals who are involved in the care of the children and young people. This joint planning and discussion also adds to the quality of care and enables staff to better understand and meet needs.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Outstanding
The children and young people at this home are kept very safe. The staff stay with	

the children and young people at all times and levels of supervision are high at all times. The staff understand risks well and are able to assess these and put appropriate measures in place, as required, to minimise any risk. Staff always talk through what is happening with the child or young person so that they learn about risk and learn how to deal with everyday situations. Staff explained to the inspector how road crossings are handled and these situations are designed to not only keep everyone safe but also to promote awareness and increased independence. A number of young people have learned to cross roads safely after practice with staff.

In the year since the previous full inspection, no child or young person has gone missing, none has been injured, bullied or had any serious accident. There are no active concerns about child sexual exploitation or any other external risk. No child, young person or any other person has made any complaint. Staff have not used any physical intervention and have not used any sanctions either. Staff are attentive and give good supervision at all times. They are clear about expectations and rules and will intervene quickly if any child or young person becomes challenging in any way. The staff have recently gained an anti-bullying award and received some very complimentary comments from the assessor. Parents and carers are also very clear that their children and young people are kept safe and secure while on their short breaks.

Staff do encourage the children and young people to become more independent and this is an ideal environment for them to be able to practice new skills. One parent told the inspector how their daughter had learned to dress and undress herself appropriately under staff supervision and said that staff had now started to teach and encourage food preparation. The parent was a little nervous that staff now wanted to introduce cooking skills but understood staff would not start this without their agreement. This demonstrates the ambition of staff and the keenness of the young person and also the willingness of staff to work in partnership and the trust the parent has in the staff.

The home is kept in good order and is well maintained so that no health and safety issues are apparent. Fire drills are practised regularly and staff are trained well in these issues. The administration of medication is given a high priority and is double checked by staff. The grounds are well kept and play areas are safe.

The recruitment of workers is safe and thorough. This ensures that children and young people are looked after by people who are safe to do so.

There is no doubt that the children and young people feel safe and secure in this home during their short breaks. One parent told the inspector how their child had become distressed at another residential short-break provision to the point where they had to stop going but was completely happy and at ease at this home.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Outstanding
<p>The registered manager is very experienced and is suitably qualified. She has huge enthusiasm for the work and is dedicated to making the experience of the children and young people as good as possible. She is very clear about the progress each and every child or young person makes and is always keen to improve this wherever possible.</p> <p>She is supportive of her staff and of the children and young people and is also supportive of parents and carers. Several parents told the inspector how much support they got from the registered manager and how much this meant.</p> <p>The staff comment on how much support they get from the registered manager. They all receive in-depth supervision and appropriate training and have an annual appraisal. One new member of staff who had just finished her three-week induction period commented on how welcome she had been made to feel and how much she had been encouraged to ask questions and discuss issues. All the staff have had full training and are up to date with refresher training and all the staff except the new starters have completed appropriate qualifications.</p> <p>The registered manager is a very hands on person who enjoys spending time with the children and young people but she is also very good at standing back and monitoring the quality of care. She takes an active part in care planning with families, social workers and other involved professionals. She is confident and able and is very able to contact and negotiate any additional services required with other external workers or agencies. She is very able to challenge others if this is required. She is academically highly qualified and does complete research into the wide variety of conditions and disabilities that she encounters with the children and young people who attend for short breaks.</p> <p>The registered manager has a strong belief in the rights of all children and young people to have the best possible opportunities in life and puts this into practice on a daily basis. She has very high expectations that her staff do this as well. Having high expectations of staff and having high aspirations for the children and young people is the basis of the very high-quality care that the organisation offers. Currently, the registered manager is working out how best to offer a young adult with learning disabilities a paid role at the home and looking into the possibility of a current service user offering some of their skills on a voluntary basis to younger children. Again, this demonstrates excellent equality practice.</p> <p>There were no requirements or recommendations made at the previous inspection and none are made at this inspection.</p>	

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 looked after children 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 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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