

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Stephanie Omorevwerha
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About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcome for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and relevant National Minimum Standards for the establishment.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding:	this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality
Good:	this aspect of the provision is strong
Satisfactory:	this aspect of the provision is sound
Inadequate:	this aspect of the provision is not good enough

Service information

Brief description of the service

The home is a short stay residential home for children and young people with physical and/or learning disabilities. It is run by an independent not for profit organisation working to meet the needs of children and adults with physical and learning disabilities. The home provides care to meet the child's and young person's physical, social and emotional needs during their stay. It is registered to provide care for up to seven children at any one time. Day care is also provided.

The home is sited in a residential area and accommodation is arranged over two floors. The house offers five bedrooms, one which is a double room, on the first floor and communal areas on the ground floor consisting of a lounge, dining room/conservatory and kitchen. The first floor does not have wider hallways or doors, which can make it difficult to move children that use a wheelchair. Suitably adapted bathroom and toilet facilities are available on both floors. A lift is provided between floors. The home has a front garden, which provides access to the home and a rear garden used for the children's play.

Due to the reduction in occupancy levels, the home closes on certain days each week, unless there are planned bookings or it is a school holiday. When children are accommodated in the home there are at least two members of staff on each shift. At night there is one waking and one sleep in member of staff.

At the time of this inspection, seven children were being cared for in the home. This included children who were staying for overnight care and those who were staying for day care.

Summary

This was an unannounced inspection of the home assessing all key national minimum standards.

The home is providing a good standard of care to children during short breaks away from home. Children are cared for by a competent staff team who have the skills and experience to look after them, particularly those with more complex health needs. Staff work well with parents, placing authorities and other professionals to ensure children's needs are met. Children indicated in surveys received that they were very happy with their care and felt safe in the home. Parents also appreciated the service and one parent commented, 'I really can't think of any improvements as the service is brilliant!'

Two recommendations were made as the result of this inspection concerning staff fire training and checking the identity of visitors.

The overall quality rating is good.

This is an overview of what the inspector found during the inspection.

Improvements since the last inspection

There was one requirement made at the last inspection relating to independent monitoring visits. There was one recommendation concerning recruitment records. Both had been addressed and fully met.

A new responsible individual has been appointed to the organisation and is now responsible for undertaking monthly monitoring visits. These are now being carried out as required and written reports of these visits are forwarded to Ofsted.

The manager has now devised a form to ensure all necessary checks are taken when recruiting new members of staff. This includes checking any gaps in employment at interview and telephone calls to previous employers to verify the reasons why employment ended when an applicant previously worked with children or vulnerable adults.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children enjoy balanced meals that take into account their likes and dislikes. Some children have specific dietary requirements, including those who need tube feeding, which the home caters for very well. Staff are trained and knowledgeable about children's specific requirements to ensure their needs can be appropriately met. Children receive support according to their ability, which varies from those who are encouraged to prepare their own snacks independently, those who need specific equipment to help them eat and those that need full support from staff.

Children's good health is promoted and plans clearly identify their needs, particularly those who have very complex physical disabilities. The home provides respite care, therefore, the responsibility for children's healthcare needs, such as attending appointments, remains with the parents or carers. Staff are competent in looking after children with complex health needs and are trained in a variety of tasks, including tube feeding, oral suction and protocols for epileptic seizures. Staff have good links with other professionals who provide the expertise and advice necessary to promote children's well-being. For example, occupational therapy assessments are essential for most children who use specialist equipment such as hoists and wheelchairs and children's files often contain photographic illustrations to make sure staff know how to position children correctly.

Children's well-being is safeguarded by robust systems for managing medication. Some children take significant amounts of medication at various times of the day and staff are vigilant in recording and monitoring any medication administered. The management of medication is further complicated as medication needs to be checked in and out every time a child stays for respite. The home has recently revised its policies and procedures to remain as vigilant as possible and to reduce the risk of errors occurring. All children's medication is checked regularly with parents to ensure information about dosage is accurate and double checked by staff in the home prior to administration.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children's privacy is respected and balanced with the need to provide care as is consistent with good parenting and the need to protect the child. Staff are sensitive when offering personal care to maintain children's dignity and enable them to express choice wherever possible. Clear guidelines are in place to ensure staff are aware of their responsibilities when handling confidential information.

Children are protected by an ethos of openness which enables concerns to be raised and discussed in a honest and frank way. Parents are encouraged to raise issues with the manager who takes all complaints seriously and investigates them thoroughly, involving other agencies when necessary. This enables matters to be satisfactorily resolved and promotes better practices when working with children.

Children are kept safe by clear procedures for responding to child protection concerns. Staff are well trained and recognise the increased vulnerability of disabled children to abuse. Staff are vigilant in monitoring children to promote their safety at all times, this means there is little or no risk of them going missing. Records confirmed no incidents of children going missing had occurred.

Staff work constructively and consistently with children to promote positive behaviours. Most children's predominant needs are health related and therefore, there is not a significant amount of challenging behaviour in the home. There are very occasional incidents of biting, scratching and hair pulling that are generally the result of children communicating dissatisfaction or upset. These are dealt with appropriately by staff who are trained in de-escalation techniques. In the same way, bullying is not an issue in the home as most children do not have enough understanding of the impact of their actions on others to carry out pre-meditated bullying.

Children are cared for in a safe and secure environment. A range of risk assessments are undertaken to manage and minimise potential hazards to children in the home and in the community. Regular checks and servicing of equipment and facilities ensures the premises are well maintained. Satisfactory fire precautions are in place, although records showed there were some gaps in staff fire training.

Children are protected by robust recruitment procedures that ensure staff are carefully selected and vetted prior to working in the home. Procedures are in place to ensure children are kept safe by monitoring visitors to the home, however, on the day of the inspection staff failed to ask for confirmation of identity.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

All children's care is provided in accordance with their care plans and these are based on their individual needs and wishes including those relating to gender, disability, religion, cultural and communication. Children are afforded a high level of support and have an allocated link worker to ensure they receive the care and attention they need. Staff are particularly good at supporting children with communication difficulties and use a range of methods to enhance understanding, for example signing, pictures and symbols. This was confirmed by a health professional who commented, 'the service is able to recognise individual's needs by getting to know them through their clients mannerisms, eye contact and using communication aids.' Staff liaise well with other professionals for children who have additional support needs, such as communication or behaviour management to ensure appropriate services are provided.

Children's education is actively promoted during their respite stays, although the main responsibility for education remains with the children's parents or carers. Staff have excellent links with local schools so they can continue to meet children's education needs and interests. Staff attend school reviews when requested and the school reports are available on the child's file to feed into the home's care plan to ensure good consistency of care.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children's needs are clearly set out in well written placement plans outlining how their needs will be met in the home. Parents are encouraged to fully participate in this process to ensure plans are kept up to date. Staff have a good knowledge of individual children's needs and there is time on shift for staff to update themselves with any important changes to the children's care. Statutory reviews take place at regular intervals and for many children this may involve a whole range of services they access, such as education, shared carers and domiciliary care. Staff take an active part in any review process ensuring they attend meetings and provide written reports of the child's time during their respite stays.

Staff liaise closely with children's families, although as the home provides a respite service giving the family a break they do not routinely visit during children's stays. Staff ensure they promote good communication with parents, including asking for regular updates about the children's care needs and providing information about children's respite stays.

Children benefit from a planned admission process which ensures their needs are properly assessed prior to admission to make certain they can be met in the home. A 'getting to know you' period is offered to confirm everyone is happy with the care provided prior to the child staying for a short break. This may involve staff meeting the child at home and visits to the home by the child for a tea or evening visit before a planned overnight stay. As children access the service for short breaks leaving the home is not really an issue, although staff do support those children moving onto other residential settings or those moving onto adult provisions.

Children are encouraged to express their views and staff are proactive in listening to children with communication difficulties enabling them to make choices in their daily lives. Staff know the children well and the link worker does a consultation paper with the child regularly to get further feedback about their opinions. Parents confirmed their opinions and views are ascertained on a frequent basis, particularly concerning their child's care to ensure information is up to date. Placing authorities are actively consulted to confirm they are happy with the service provided.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are given support in preparing for the transition to adult services. For many children this involves the need for continued support as due to their disabilities they are unlikely to be able to live independently. Staff liaise with placing authorities about future plans and support children according to their individual plans. This includes encouraging the promotion of independent skills where possible such as dressing, self-care and preparing drinks and snacks.

Children are accommodated in a homely environment that is well decorated and maintained. Children are provided with appropriate equipments to meet their specialist needs such as hoists, lift, adapted bath and beds. Children have adequate space in bedrooms to store their belongings and clothes for short stays. Although the building meets the home's stated purpose, it is not ideal for children with physical disabilities as it has two storeys and narrow corridors which makes moving and handling more difficult.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

An updated Statement of Purpose is in place setting out the services objectives which is to offer a short break service including day and overnight care to children with physical and learning disabilities. A simple children's guide is available in an accessible format using pictures and symbols to promote children's understanding of the facilities in the home.

Children benefit from a stable staff team who have a good mix of skills and experience. Staff are well trained, especially in providing for children's additional health needs, to ensure they can carry out tasks confidently and competently. Children are provided with a good level of staffing which is assessed according to individual need. There is minimum of two children to one member of staff at all times and additional one-to-one staffing is providing when indicated on children's care plans. Shifts are well organised so staff are clear about the children they are supporting ensuring children have full attention and care at all times. A senior member of staff has responsibility for the shift and is additional to the rota to provide extra support when necessary and undertake other tasks such as administering medication.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Children have plans that reflect their individuality and identify a diverse range of needs, including those relating to their disability, religion and culture. Staff are familiar with children's needs and are encouraged to share their personal knowledge of children's preferences. There is a mixed staff team to promote gender sensitive care where possible. Children with specific health needs, including those needing intimate care, are supported in a respectful way that promotes their dignity. Children with communication difficulties are listened to and supported in their individual method of communication. Children are encouraged to access the local community to promote social inclusion.

Children's care is effectively monitored and appropriate action is taken to promote continued improvement in the home's performance. The manager regularly reviews all aspects of the service and identifies any areas for further development. A new responsible individual has been appointed since the last inspection and has begun to undertake monitoring visits to provide an independent view of standards of care. This has had a positive impact providing useful feedback to the manager and a written report highlighting any recommendations for improvement.

Children's files meet with statutory requirements and provide an accurate reflection of children's development and progress during their stays.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions, which must be taken so that the registered person meets the Care Standards Act 2000, The Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

Standard	Action	Due date
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Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure all staff undertake appropriate fire training at regular intervals. (NMS 26)
- implement the home's procedure for monitoring visitors to the home correctly by ensuring appropriate identity checks are undertaken prior to admission. (NMS 27)