

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC019441
Inspection date	18/01/2012
Inspector	David Putnam
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	17/03/2011
--------------------------------	------------

© Crown copyright 2012

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

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 to assess the effectiveness of the service and to consider how well it complies with the relevant regulations and meets the national minimum standards.

The report details the main strengths, any areas for improvement, including any breaches of regulation, and any failure to meet national minimum standards. The judgements included in the report are made against the *Inspections of children's homes – framework for inspection* (March 2011) and the evaluation schedule for children's homes.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: a service that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

Good: a service that exceeds minimum requirements

Satisfactory: a service that only meets minimum requirements

Inadequate: a service that does not meet minimum requirements

Service information

Brief description of the service

This short-break centre is run by a registered charity. The home is a single-storey building designed for use by children and young people with a range of disabilities. It offers overnight short-break care places for up to five children and young people aged from five to 17 years with learning disabilities who may also have physical disabilities. Day care is also offered on the same site for children and young people with similar needs. Adaptations have been made to meet the range of needs children and young people using the service may have.

Overall effectiveness

The overall effectiveness is judged to be **good**.

Children and young people enjoy safe and stimulating experiences when they have short breaks in this home. Dedicated and enthusiastic staff demonstrate care and compassion in identifying and meeting the individual needs of children and young people. Comprehensive and detailed care plans recognise the individuality of children and young people. Parents and social workers praise the service for the difference it makes to children, young people and their families. One parent said, 'I'm a huge fan', adding, 'they've changed our lives'.

Staff work hard to limit the impact of disability for the children and young people, who participate in a wide range of activities to broaden their experience. Children and young people experience consistency as a result of positive communication between staff in the home and other professionals. The views of children and young people are consistently taken into account using a range of communication methods. They are consistently encouraged and enabled to make individual choices.

Aspects of the leadership and management fall short of required expectations or national minimum standards. The impact upon children and young people is currently not significant but there is potential for this to change.

Areas for improvement

Statutory Requirements

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

Reg.	Requirement	Due date
4	compile in relation to the children's home a written statement	31/03/2012

(2001)	(in these Regulations referred to as 'the statement of purpose') which shall consist of a statement as to the matters listed in Schedule 1 (Regulation 4(1))	
16 (2001)	update the written policy which is intended to safeguard children accommodated in the children's home from abuse or neglect; and sets out the procedure to be followed in the event of any allegation of abuse or neglect (Regulation 16(1)(a) and (b))	20/02/2012
16 (2001)	prepare and implement as required a written policy for the prevention of bullying in the children's home, which shall in particular set out the procedure for dealing with an allegation of bullying (Regulation 16(4)(a))	20/02/2012
17B (2001)	ensure that within 24 hours of the use of any measure of control, restraint or discipline in a children's home, a written record is made in a volume kept for the purpose which shall include all matters listed in this regulation (Regulation 17B(3) and (4))	20/02/2012
34 (2001)	ensure the registered person shall establish and maintain a system for monitoring the matters set out in Schedule 6 at appropriate intervals; and improving the quality of care provided in the children's home (Regulation 34(1)(a) and (b))	31/03/2012

Recommendations

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

- ensure the children's home has a record of the recruitment and vetting checks which have been carried out on those working (including volunteers) for the children's home which includes all those listed in this standard (NMS 16.3)
- ensure all existing care staff have attained a minimum level 3 qualification. All new staff engaged from April 2011 are to hold the level 3 Children and Young Peoples Workforce Diploma which must include mandatory social care units; or be working towards the Diploma within 6 months of confirmation of employment (NMS 18.5)
- ensure staff have access to support and advice, and are provided with regular supervision by appropriately qualified and experienced staff (NMS 19.4)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for children and young people are **good**.

Children and young people have a positive experience when they come to stay at this short-break unit. Staff are sensitive to the needs of all children and young people who are comfortable in each other's company. Some children and young people make particular friendships. Although, not always possible, staff will try to plan visits

to accommodate particular relationships.

All children and young people staying at the unit attend school. There are strong relationships with all schools. Staff are invited to attend school reviews and communication books are exchanged with both schools and parents. In this way, positive contact is maintained and any issues relating to children and young people are shared effectively. Staff adhere to thorough medication procedures, allowing continuity of care when meeting the physical health needs of children and young people. The emotional and psychological needs of children and young people are efficiently addressed through comprehensive short-break care plans. These directly inform the actions of staff in meeting the individual needs of children and young people in their care. Staff positively promote self-care for children and young people, encouraging them to do as much as possible for themselves.

Social workers refer to the positive contributions staff make to meetings with other professionals. Staff will always try to identify ways to resolve problems or difficulties. In this way, children and young people with significantly challenging behaviours are still able to access the service. Social workers talk about the perseverance of staff in delivering positive outcomes for children and young people saying, 'they won't give up'. One parent said, 'they have gone above and beyond'.

Each person that stays at the unit has a disability. Staff do their best to ensure this does not inhibit the experiences available to children and young people in their care. Staff enable children and young people to take part in normal, age-appropriate activities. Where possible they will attempt to overcome any barriers to this. For example, staff were observed discussing and arranging attendance at autistic-friendly screenings at the local cinema. Photographs show one young person at the opening of a new park in the community that was designed for people with disabilities. A minibus enables trips further afield. Trips are planned well in advance. Staff consider care plans and risk assessments to include all children and young people where possible. Parents are confident in the ability of staff and communicate with staff to give informed consent.

Since the last inspection, changes in the local authority resulted in a number of children and young people now receiving their short breaks in newly opened settings. Staff worked hard and children, young people and their families were supported to manage these transitions. Staff from the new units were encouraged to visit the children and young people in this setting. Staff went to visit the new homes with children, young people and their families. Key information about each child and young person was shared appropriately. Reassurance was given to parents through a time of change. In the same way, staff support young people to move on to adult provision when this occurs. Through the commitment of staff, children and young people are helped to see transition as a positive experience.

Quality of care

The quality of the care is **good**.

Children and young people say they enjoy coming to the home and like the staff. In addition, they communicate this through their body language and demeanour. Parents describe changes in their children's behaviour, which clearly indicate their child's desire to go to the home. Children and young people demonstrate genuine friendship with each other. Relationships with staff are positive and constructive. One parent said, 'staff know my child as an individual and meet his needs'. A social worker said, 'they are a dedicated staff team who know the children and young people really well'.

The experiences of children and young people are enhanced by the quality of their individual care plans. Staff liaise with a wide range of people, who know each child or young person, to ensure care plans are comprehensive and detailed. Staff demonstrate a desire to incorporate the views of children and young people into their care plan. They respond to the needs of individual children to do this in creative ways. The plans are finalised with the agreement of parents, social workers and the Registered Manager. Care plans are reviewed regularly. Where staff identify the need to amend care plans, this is always agreed with the same people. The management of difficult or challenging behaviours is addressed within individual care plans because staff approach each child or young person's needs separately. Care plans include specific details that reflect personal identity and cultural background. Staff value, respect and adhere to the religious values of children and young people. Where necessary, staff use translators to communicate with families directly and in writing. Children and young people have access to resources in their own language.

As a short-breaks service, the overall responsibility for the health and education of children and young people remains with their parents. However, staff establish and maintain positive communication with health professionals and school staff. Consequently, children and young people benefit from staff receiving relevant advice from occupational therapists, physiotherapists and clear information regarding medication from general practitioners. Equally, liaison with schools results in consistency in the way challenging behaviours are managed. In some cases, parents are trained in the same approach to bring further continuity for children and young people.

Staff use a range of communication methods to provide children and young people with considerable choice during their stay. In this way, children and young people are encouraged to make their own decisions. For example, picture symbols are available to show to staff, freedom of movement around the home allows them to decide which activity to undertake, and a choice of food and drink is provided at meal times.

The home runs a regular forum with residents to obtain their views on the service. The opportunity for children and young people to complain exists, but staff say children and young people are more likely to make a request than to complain. Staff respond positively to requests and explain or give alternatives if it is not possible to meet a request or respond immediately. Parents do know how to complain. When they do, managers respond swiftly in an open and honest way that aims to learn from complaints and improve services in the future.

The home provides a wide range of activities within the home and in the wider community. Recent trips have included those to the seaside, Winter Wonderland and the London Eye. These give children and young people using the service the opportunity to expand their experiences. Social workers refer to the positive way in which staff plan activities to ensure young people are not excluded. Parents acknowledge that their children can opt out of taking part in activities that are new to them. However, they recognise that staff persevere in offering a broad range of activities to expand what their children will do.

The home is well designed in respect of its overall layout and the adaptations that have been installed to meet the different needs of the children and young people using the service. The garden provides a large space for children and young people to play. A separate sensory garden is an excellent resource which provides both a relaxing and stimulating environment for children and young people. Staff recognise that in places the interior décor is looking tired. Repairs were completed and decoration started following the last inspection, but problems with minor leaks persisted. These have now been resolved. A tendering process for the redecoration of the home has been completed. This means that children and young people can look forward to the home being completely redecorated in the coming months.

Safeguarding children and young people

The service is **good** at keeping children and young people safe and feeling safe.

Parents are confident that their children are safe and happy within the short-break centre. One parent said, 'I am such a protective mum, he wouldn't be going if I wasn't happy with the service'. Children and young people demonstrate they feel safe at the home through their willingness to go there and their attitude and demeanour while they are there.

There has been no incidence of a child going missing since the last inspection and for several years before that. However, staff remain alert to the risk that this could happen and the impact this would have on the safety of children and young people. Consequently, clear procedures exist that detail what action to take should staff believe a child is missing. These procedures are known to staff and displayed next to every exit door.

Suitable security measures are in place throughout the building. These protect children and young people from unauthorised access to the building. At the same time, children and young people are safeguarded as they are not able to leave the home without staff being present. The visitors' book contains a laminated sheet detailing conditions of entry and the responsibilities placed upon visitors to promote the safety of children and young people in the home. For example, contractors are given instructions regarding the use and storage of tools on the premises.

Multi-purpose alarms are available for use in all bedrooms. Children and young people can operate these by push button or pull cord to obtain help from staff.

Alternatively, they can be used as sensors to alert staff when a bedroom door is opened. Agreement to use any form of monitoring is included in children's and young people's care plans. Parents sign these documents to indicate their consent.

Children and young people benefit from detailed assessments that highlight potential risks and identify ways to reduce them. These documents inform how staff manage situations both within and outside the home.

Staff are trained in an appropriate technique to manage challenging behaviours. This training is refreshed annually. Children and young people experience continuity because the same technique is used in local schools. Parents confirm that restraint is only used by staff to avoid a child or young person harming themselves or someone else. Parents say they are always contacted if their child is restrained. Records of restraints are made promptly. The Registered Manager monitors these regularly. These records do not fully reflect the requirements set out in the regulations. However, the gaps in recording are limited and this shortfall does not have a significant impact upon children and young people.

Safeguarding training for all core staff is up to date. An introduction to safeguarding children and young people is now part of the induction of all new staff. The home's safeguarding policy and guidance on responding to allegations require updating. There is limited impact for children and young people as staff demonstrate sound knowledge, understanding and confidence regarding appropriate safeguarding practice.

There is nothing to suggest that children and young people are affected by bullying within the short-break centre. Two risk assessments are in place, one of which is a response to a recommendation made at the last inspection. There is currently no policy in place regarding the prevention of bullying. This is a requirement of the regulations, but the absence of such a policy has not directly affected children and young people using the service.

The core staff team has remained stable since before the last inspection. This results in continuity and familiarity for children and young people when they come to stay. Equally, staff get to know the children and young people well over an extended period. Recruitment of new staff is therefore limited. When they are recruited, there are good selection and checking procedures which are followed up by a sound induction process. However, the recruitment and vetting records kept within the home do not meet those set out in the national minimum standards. Again, the impact this has upon children and young people is limited.

Leadership and management

The leadership and management of the children's home are **satisfactory**.

This inspection highlighted one example where managers have allowed a young person receiving a service to stay beyond the limits of a short-breaks service. As such, in this limited circumstance, the service has been acting outside the aims and

objectives set out in its Statement of Purpose. The outcomes for the particular young person have been positive. The home meets a significant level of assessed need and it is recognised that it is not in the young person's best interests to be placed elsewhere in an unfamiliar setting.

Currently the Statement of Purpose sets out the aims and objectives of the service as a short-breaks unit. Placing authorities and parents are informed about the services provided. However, the document does not address all the requirements set out in Schedule 1 of the Regulations. For children and young people there are two different guides. These vary in content and are adapted to meet the different communication needs of children and young people. One uses picture symbols to support understanding of the written word. The other uses straightforward language, which is supported by photographs of the home and children and young people using the service. These visual prompts help to inform children and young people and familiarise them with different aspects of the service.

Managers model genuine commitment to meeting the needs of children and young people. This is mirrored in a loyal staff group who demonstrate real dedication and perseverance to do the best for the children and young people in their care. Currently, the majority, but not all staff have attained the minimum social care qualifications set out in the minimum standards. Records of supervision indicate that the frequency of supervision is not consistent with all staff. Managers recognise the important role that both training and supervision play in providing quality services for children and young people.

Requirements and recommendations made at the last inspection have all been addressed, resulting in an improved environment and enhanced safety for children and young people. It was not possible to amend the public liability insurance certificate to include the address of home. Every effort was made to complete this recommendation, but as the cover is for the whole organisation, this could not be achieved. This does not affect children and young people. The insurance cover remains the same.

Standards regarding health and safety remain high. All key safety checks are up to date. Risk assessments for individual children and young people are in place and significantly inform the approach of staff with each child and young person. Together with the parent organisation, the home is currently reviewing risk assessment processes. Staff have developed the home's relationship with the local fire service. In a positive development, agreement has been reached for them to assist staff, children and young people with the next night time emergency evacuation drill. This will develop the skills and confidence of staff in ensuring the safety of children and young people if emergencies occur.

Regular monthly independent monitoring visits are conducted. Reports of these are routinely submitted to Ofsted. The visit process provides robust challenge for the manager and staff to improve the care provided to children and young people. Recommendations are made and consistently followed up. Staff are open and honest about the services they provide for children and young people. They recognise their

strengths, but communicate a desire to improve for the benefit of children and young people using the service. The manager monitors a wide range of matters and also demonstrates good awareness of the strengths of the home and areas where children and young people would benefit from improvements. However, this is not addressed through a formal process, meaning that not all the matters listed in the relevant schedule of the regulations are addressed.

The home is adequately resourced. Adaptations have had to be made following a reduction in budget. The home no longer provides short breaks on a Monday night. Managers and staff have used this opportunity to develop other services for families. These services are not covered by this inspection, but nonetheless children, young people, their siblings and parents value them. The home employs sufficient staff and rotas them accordingly to meet the individual needs of children and young people placed each night. Managers recognise a general difficulty in employing permanent male staff. However, social workers praise the way the home works with single fathers. In addition, social workers report that managers bring in male bank staff to meet specific identified need.

Managers and staff foster positive working relationships with outside agencies. Records for each child or young person kept within the home are good. They are clear, concise and give necessary detail of care provided. Information is stored securely. Staff professionally and competently share information when necessary.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.