

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Cheryl Carter
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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 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 children's home provides respite care as well as medium to long-term care for children aged seven years to under 18 years.

The home provides medium to long-term residential care for up to four younger children and sibling groups and for a further three children aged between seven and 17 years on admission, who may have emotional, behavioural or learning disabilities.

Overall effectiveness

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

Children's individual care needs are well met. The home provides children with a good level of care and support that allows them to thrive. Care planning systems are in place and children receive individual care and guidance from staff. Children are happy living in the home and say that they feel safe. This is reflected in the positive relationships and trust that exist between the children, and the staff at the home. Children are protected from significant harm by robust recruitment procedures and an effective induction programme. The staff team are committed and work hard to enable children reach their potential. As a result, children are given opportunities to learn new skills and try out new activities. This includes accessing community activities and resources which help to increase and improve their independence.

The health needs of children receiving respite care remain the responsibility of parents, however those of the children on long-term placements are prioritised and they are enabled to access health services without delay. In the same way the educational needs of the children on respite remain the responsibility of parents. Those children on long-term placements receive good support to ensure that their educational needs and interests are prioritised.

The management team understands the strengths and areas of further development for the home. Care plans are monitored by the allocated key worker and the manager to ensure the health and safety of each child receiving a service at the home. Children live in a safe homely environment however the décor is somewhat dated especially the upstairs bedrooms and landings. Supervision is effectively managed, but not all staff have their training needs outlined in personal development plans. The new manager is proactive in addressing shortfalls to improve the service provided to the children.

Areas for improvementStatutory 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
5 (2001)	ensure that the Statement of Purpose and the children's guide is regularly reviewed and revised whenever necessary. Any revisions must be notified to HMCI within 28 days (Regulation 5)	12/09/2011

Recommendations

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

- ensure there is a good quality learning and development programme which staff are supported to undertake through personal development plans. In particular this relates to training relating to signs and symbols (NMS 18.1)
- ensure that the home is always well maintained and clean especially in relation to the carpets in the upstairs hallway. (NMS 10)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Children receive a good standard of support to meet their individual needs; as a result children gain in confidence to reach their potential. Staff communicate well with parents and other agencies to ensure children needs in relation to health and education are met for those children on long-term placements. Although the health and educational needs of the children on short breaks remains the responsibility of parents, staff attend reviews and contribute fully to the process. As a result, there is sufficient information about a child to inform future planning. A parent comments she has seen improvements in her child as a result of the support from the home, mainly relating to bedtimes.

Children participate in the community and access a range of opportunities which they enjoy, for example, going to the park and the local leisure centre for swimming. This enables children to participate in a range of opportunities and social experiences. Young people achieve their potential and make choices about what they do in their spare time. This shows a commitment to ensuring children are part of the community. Children can express their wishes and feelings using a variety of communication methods and staff act on these views wherever possible. However not all staff have received training in communicating with signs and symbols as a

result, some staff are not able to communicate effectively with all the children. The new manager has identified this as an area for development.

Children make small but significant progress in a variety of ways through the support they receive from the home. For example, young people are assisted to become more independent and supported to go out alone to complete some identified tasks to aid their independence.

Quality of care

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

This home provides well-planned and good individual care for children. Children's care needs are effectively and comprehensively assessed. Each child has an individual care plan which is well written and guides staff on individual aspects of care for each child; this ensures that staff have a consistent approach in providing care. Designated key workers monitor care plans to ensure individual needs are met and care plans are effectively implemented during children's stays.

Staff use various communication methods to seek the views of children who are non-verbal or have very limited vocabularies. However not all the staff are trained in using signs and symbols as a result staff are not always as fast as they could be in understanding what the child is trying to communicate or children understanding what is being communicated to them. Evidence shows that they and their family members are also consulted regularly to improve the service delivery. Information regarding access to advocacy services is provided. Staff encourage children and their family members to complete user surveys as a way of consulting with children and their families to ensure that the service continues to meet their needs.

Children know how to make a complaint because the procedure is explained and written in picture format in the children's guide. Their parents are also made aware of how to complain on behalf of their child. Complaints are used to improve practice; however they are few in number. Parents are in very regular contact with the home, when they bring and pick up their children from their short break, and any issues are usually raised during these contacts. The home receives a number of compliments about the care they provide. For example some parents send cards thanking staff for their help and support.

Children live in a healthy environment that promotes their physical and emotional well being. The staff work in partnership with parents. All health needs are highlighted in the child's plan and staff have extra training if the needs are complex, for example, in relation to epilepsy. The staff are guided by policies and procedures which address how to deal with accidents and injuries. All the staff have up-to-date first aid training which ensures that staff know how to respond in an emergency. They also ensure children get suitable medical advice and treatment when they are feeling unwell.

Children eat a healthy diet and are encouraged to eat fruit and vegetables. Special

dietary needs are catered for, for example softer food and cultural and religious dietary needs are met.

The home is located on a quiet estate and is appropriately secure, maintained to a reasonable standard and offers adequate facilities.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Children say they feel safe and are happy in this home. Children were observed to be playful in the company of the staff. Staff are good at identifying risks and manage and minimise these risks through written risk assessments. Risk assessments are regularly reviewed and updated in response to new information or incidents, so staff can respond appropriately and protect children.

Children very rarely are missing due to close supervision in line with the level of their vulnerabilities. In the event that a child should go missing the home has clear policies and procedures that inform staff about what action to take, which include good protocols with the police. Bullying is rare within the unit and incidents between children are often as a result of difficult behaviours displayed rather than bullying. Staff have developed a good understanding of the times and factors that contribute to young people becoming upset. Staff use well-thought out behaviour management strategies, such as rewarding and praising good behaviour. This effectively and consistently reduces young people's anxieties and frustrations, and as a result improves young people's behaviour.

Staff know how to respond to any incidents of a safeguarding nature. The procedures are easily available and staff have training, which has recently been updated. These procedures ensure that staff know what to do in the event of any child protection concerns to ensure that children are protected in the event of an allegation. Staff are aware of any child that is subject to safeguarding concerns and are knowledgeable about what to do if there are concerns and work closely with the social workers to ensure that the child is protected.

Sanctions and incidents of restraint are few and are recorded appropriately. These are monitored by the Regulation 33 visitor. Staff are trained in behaviour management which includes a recognised method of physical intervention but the emphasis is on prevention and distraction to minimise incidents. Children are encouraged to behave positively through encouragement and rewards. As a result children are able to discuss their feelings with staff and work out ways of managing their negative emotions.

Children live in a safe environment. All risks are assessed and minimised. Equipment is checked at the appropriate intervals and fire safety measures are thorough. Children benefit from being cared for by staff that are committed and trained to meet their needs. Recruitment procedures are robust to ensure that only staff who are suitable to work with children are employed. All visitors to the home sign the

visitors' book, have their identity checked and are monitored while on the premises to ensure children are protected.

Leadership and management

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

Outcomes for children have improved under new leadership within the home. The manager has addressed the actions and recommendations from the previous inspection. This has resulted in some improvements in the quality of the care in relation to relationships with children and the activities available to the children and thus children's well-being is further promoted.

The manager is keen to improve and develop the service. The manager is currently working with his staff team to ensure that all the skills within the team are effectively utilised for the benefit of the children using the service. A recent consultation with an independent consultant highlighted areas of development to ensure the smooth running of the home. As a result changes to the staffing structure and the introductory of a deputy manager have already had a positive impact on the lives of the children in the home. The manager has addressed these changes through good planning and a flexible use of the current staffing.

The aims and objectives of the service are detailed in the Statement of Purpose however this does not include changes to reflect the new standards. The children's guide is produced in a child-friendly format however this does not include updated information relating to contacting Ofsted.

Monitoring arrangements have improved. The manager is aware of the need to notify significant events to Ofsted, there have been no incidents needing notification since the last inspection. The Regulation 33 visits have improved and now include observations of, and where possible, comments from children. The manager monitors the quality of care through Regulation 34 reports but also on an ongoing basis through supervision, consultation with the children, the contact with their parents, carers and other agencies. This monitoring is used to inform the development of the home.

Staffing levels are good. There is a manager on call at all times. This ensures that children are appropriately supervised and their needs are met. Staff training has improved. The manager has a training plan in place for the remainder of the year. The manager will commence a management training course in September. The training is relevant for the needs of the children who use the service for short breaks and long-term placements. Staff are well supported by regular supervision. This ensures they can reflect on their practice and develop their skills and abilities to provide an effective service to the children that use the service.

Children's records are well structured and are held securely and confidentially. Young people make good progress because of the effective management systems that are in place. The home is adequately resourced and managers ensure that

health and safety requirements are met. As a result young people live in a safe environment which meets their needs.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.