

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Emeline Evans
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This home provides short breaks for children and young people who have a learning and/or physical disability, who may require nursing care and are living at home with their family.

The home is jointly funded by a Primary Care Trust and a local authority, and managed by the Children and Young People's Directorate of the local authority. The home is registered to accommodate up to six children and young people, two of whom may be under eight years. Other services offered include day care, after school care and support groups.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: a service of exceptional quality that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

Good: a service of high quality that exceeds minimum requirements

Adequate: a service that only meets minimum requirements

Inadequate: a service that does not meet minimum requirements

Overall effectiveness

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

Children accessing the service are supported by a stable and experienced staff team who are committed to improving outcomes for children. The staff team aim to ensure that the children have fun during their short-break visit. One parent described the home as 'wonderful and amazing' and she is 'able to have a break knowing her child is happy'. The Registered Manager understands the strengths of the service and is looking for innovative ways to further improve the quality of care provided.

Children benefit from individualised care described as 'dedicated and caring' by one parent. Staff know the children well and there is measurable progress in areas such as social development and confidence. The staff team are constantly looking for ways to further enhance children's self-esteem; they have introduced a 'positive tree' and children's art work is proudly displayed around the home. Staff use imaginative ways to gain the views of the children and enable them to have a choice and therefore influence the running of the home. Care plans take into account the children's complex needs with an aim to achieve a personalised package of care and support.

Children report that they feel safe and the home has introduced a new system of

planning short breaks visits to ensure children's individual needs are met; this is enabling children to consistently feel safe and comfortable in their environment. Staff are equipped with the skills to recognise when children are upset or worried and are proactive on acting on concerns.

There are shortfalls identified in some aspects of paperwork and this is due to the manager and senior staff team giving priority to meeting the needs of the children accessing the service. The Registered Manager recognises the home's shortfalls and is aware of the action to take to further improve outcomes for the children who access the service.

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
17B (2001)	ensure that the use of any measure of control, restraint or discipline is kept as a written record in a volume kept for the purpose and shall include the information detailed in Regulation 17B (Regulation 17B (3) (a - i))	06/08/2012
34 (2001)	ensure the monitoring of matters set out in Schedule 6 shall provide for consultation with children, parents and placing authorities and the system focuses on improving the quality of care provided. (Regulation 34 (1(a)(2))	06/08/2012

Recommendations

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

- review the procedure and the record keeping for the disposal of medications (NMS 6.13)
- review the building access risk assessment to ensure the use of fob keys and the locking of doors allows children as much freedom as possible, consistent with the need to keep them safe (Volume 5, statutory guidance, para 2.108)
- ensure the children's guide to the home includes how a child can contact the Children's Right Director, their independent reviewing officer and the correct details for Ofsted (NMS 13.5)
- ensure all records relating to a child are kept up to date and regularly reviewed. (NMS 22.1)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Staff work in partnership with parents and professionals to thoroughly access children's individual needs prior to accessing the service. This practice ensures children benefit from personalised support during their stay, which helps them grow in confidence. Children's emotional well-being is central in all aspects of care planning and intervention. Staff understand and interpret the individual and complex needs of the children. This enables children to develop and progress in many areas.

The staff team encourage healthy eating and use a variety of alternative methods of communication, such as symbols and pictures to ensure that children are able to make a choice about what they would like to eat. The communication systems in place are constantly being revised to ensure all children are able to exercise choice.

Children benefit from these periods away from home; they are purposeful and children develop new social skills and are supported to make decisions in order to maximise their independence. Staff celebrate children's achievements and have introduced a 'positive tree'; this includes personal developments such as helping with tea and listening to adults. This is further enhancing children's self-esteem.

Children engage in all sorts of activities in the community and are encouraged to learn and try new experiences when visiting the home. Staff ensure children make use of age-appropriate local amenities such as parks, swimming pools, walks and the cinema. This helps children to develop an understanding of the community environment and become confident in social situations. One social worker commented 'the staff know the children well and they set up individual activities for them.' Children also have a wide variety of activities within the home including, a large garden area, activity room and sensory room. Children are supported to contribute to the upkeep of a vegetable patch and sensory garden, through participating in these activities, children learn to take responsibility and this enhances their self-esteem.

Children's educational needs are fully supported. Staff ensure there is good communication with the schools and attend educational reviews as appropriate. Staff work closely with school teachers with regard to individual needs; this ensures a consistent approach is achieved. Communication between staff and parents has been an area, which has developed since the last inspection. The home provides opportunities for parents to be involved in parents meetings where they are able to give feedback to the home. Newsletters are also produced to further enhance communication between the home and parents. This practice is allowing a holistic approach to be achieved. The home is using the information received to further improve outcomes for children.

Children receive the care and encouragement to promote their independence. Staff support children, appropriate to their age and understanding, to develop practical

skills such as self-care and daily living skills. Children are now able to lay the table, help with the preparation of food and to confidently spend time away from their parents. One parent commented 'the service has developed my child's independence.'

Quality of care

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

The children benefit from good supportive relationships from experienced staff members. Comments from parents include 'the staff are dedicated and caring,' and 'the staff are an amazing group of people' and 'my son is always asking to go to the home and loves going there'. Staff interact with the children using appropriate verbal signs and alternative methods of communication. The home has introduced a 'feelings board.' Staff support the children to be able to express their feelings and reassure children during difficult times. This board is enabling the children to communicate when they are upset or worried. The staff team involves the children in regular children's meetings. Children are supported to make their views known in the running of the home. They make choices in the activities they do and the food they eat. This results in children feeling their views are actively sought and they are listened to.

Staff place an emphasis on ensuring that children have fun during their stay at the home. Children benefit from the home's new planning of short break stays. The home takes care to ensure the needs of the children accessing the service are compatible. This enhances the opportunities for peer interaction and enables children to develop social skills.

Children can access a child-friendly complaints form. There is also an easily accessible complaints board on display in the communal area. These methods are appropriate to the children's level of understanding that are presently accessing the service. Since the last inspection, there has been one complaint; the manager has been proactive in addressing this concern and has made appropriate changes to ensure the complaint was resolved. The staff team has learnt from this process and as a result, the quality of care has been enhanced.

Children's individual care needs are identified and detailed within comprehensive placement plans. These plans take into account the diverse and complex needs of the children accessing the service, including their medical, health and cultural needs. The home is in the process of changing children's placement plans into a more user-friendly format, which will incorporate all of the children's needs in to one document. However, presently some of the children's placement plans and risk assessments have not been recently reviewed. Therefore, staff may not be fully aware of current information for that child, which could lead to confusion.

There is a clear audit trail of medication coming into and leaving the unit. Children's medications are locked in a secure cabinet and overarching medication policies and procedures are in place. However, the disposal of medicines is not clear; staff

dispose of tablets into a clinical waste bag and liquids are poured down the sink. There is not a robust system in place to record the disposal of medications and any instances that when medication is dropped or refused, it is presently entered on drug error sheets. There is appropriate attention provided to any emerging or on-going health or emotional needs. Staff work closely with families and community nurses to monitor children's health during their stay and respond appropriately to any concerns.

The home provides a safe and pleasant environment in which children enjoy their stay; there are photos of children having fun displayed all around the home. Children's artwork is proudly displayed; this gives children a sense of achievement and ownership. The home provides good spaces for group and individual activities. The home is well resourced to stimulate children and promote sensory development through the use of the sensory room, sensory garden and activity room.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Parents and social workers say that their children's safety is given a high priority within the home. Staff receive regular training on safeguarding and they recognise the particular vulnerabilities relating to the needs of children with disabilities. One parent commented 'My daughter feels safe at the home and is always happy to go, I have no concerns, it is brilliant.'

Children are closely supported by the staff team and staff recognise the diverse needs of the children and take steps to address these. Staff are sensitive to children's need for privacy and dignity. Care planning documentation identifies risks and preventative measures. These are consistently implemented and keep children safe.

The home has been focusing on when groups of children access the service and has looked at any incidents of challenging behaviours. They now have a system in place to try to reduce incidents and the home has taken the views of parents and the needs of children into account when planning short breaks. This practice is reducing the number of challenging situations within the home. Staff promote positive behaviours by giving consistent messages to children alongside a focus on encouragement, reward and de-escalation. Staff are regularly trained in behaviour management and techniques of physical restraint. As a result, behaviour is well managed and there have been a low number of restraints since the last inspection. The home has a bound volume for recording any physical interventions. However, the volume does not capture all the required information as detailed in the relevant regulation, and this makes it difficult for the Registered Manager to monitor the effectiveness of interventions and fully look at patterns and trends.

There are clear guidelines in place to counter bullying and similarly procedures are in place for recording incidents if a child is missing from the home. Staff are aware of procedures to be followed in the event of this occurring. There have been no related

incidents of children missing from the home. In practice, this area does not present as an issue for the children currently accessing the service.

There is careful selection and vetting of staff working with children in the home. The home ensures that all agency staff working in the home have all the checks required by regulation completed by the agency before they start work there. This practice is consistently applied and ensures children are not cared for by adults who may cause them harm.

Children are cared for in an environment, which is physically safe, and specialist equipment within the home is checked and serviced regularly. The building is kept secure through the use of key pads and fobs on internal and external doors. The home does not have a risk assessment in place relating to the securing of internal and external doors. It is difficult to examine the overall need to keep children safe whilst recognising the need to allow them as much freedom as possible.

Leadership and management

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

The Registered Manager and staff team are committed and focused on improving the quality of care provided. The senior and management team understand the strengths of the home and is aware of areas for development. There is a development plan in place, this is very child focused and has a clear emphasis of achieving improved outcomes for children. There were no requirements or recommendations raised at the last Ofsted inspection. The manager however, used the inspection process to focus on the quality of care provided.

Children are provided with pictorial information about the service, which summarises the homes Statement of Purpose. However, this children's guide does not contain information on how children can contact their independent reviewing officer, the Children's Rights director or the correct details for Ofsted. This shortfall does not enable children to be fully aware of their rights. The Statement of Purpose comprehensively outlines the aims and objectives of the service. This means that children, parents and placing authorities are clear about the service provided and the support available to meet the individual children's needs.

There are various systems in place to audit the items set out within the regulations, including monthly visits from a designated person and monitoring by the Registered Manager. While the reports document monitoring of items listed in Schedule 6, they do not show that feedback about the quality of care has been routinely sought from children, parents and placing authorities. There is evidence that the home sends out feedback questionnaires however, this information is not being used within the monitoring process. The absence of this information does not enable the Registered Manager to fully evaluate the quality of care provided or to use the feedback received to influence the further development of the service.

Staffing levels are sufficient and the children benefit from staff who work together

and are experienced and knowledgeable. The staff team work to cover any gaps in the rota internally; this ensures children receive consistent care from people who know their needs well. Social workers recognise these qualities. Staff undertake a detailed induction which provides them with the competencies required to meet the complex needs of the children. They also receive regular training, which enhances their individual skills. Staff are complimentary about the training offered and find it relevant to their work with individual children.

Children's files are stored securely and contain documents that are relevant and contribute to an understanding of the child's life. This helps staff in supporting children to understand their background. The home is in the process of implementing a new system to store all of the children's documents electronically. This will enable staff to have easy access to all available information.

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.