

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Joanne Vyas
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Provision subtype	Children's home

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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* (December 2010) 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 home provides care and accommodation for up to 10 children and young people, aged five to 17 years at any one time who have a learning disability and who may also have a physical disability. The home provides an overnight short breaks service.

The home is divided into two units each catering for a different age group. One unit primarily provides care for five to 12 year olds with the other providing care for 12 to 17 year olds. However, there are times where both groups of children and young people mix together for activities, meals or outings when appropriate.

The home is situated in an urban residential area and has its own transport facilities. These provide opportunities for children and young people to access the wide range of amenities in the local and wider community.

Overall effectiveness

The overall effectiveness of the children's home is judged to be **good**.

There is a strong and committed management and leadership team who support a caring, highly qualified staff team. Together they provide a valuable and essential short break service to disabled children and their families. They promote new life experiences and support children's progress and development ensuring a successful transition into adult life. The promotion of equality and diversity in this home is outstanding. This is a child focused home where children are at the centre of key decisions. Staff provide an individualised service for each child and ensure their cultural and religious needs are fully promoted.

Further improvement can be made to documents of care plans, risk assessments and the Regulation 33 report to ensure these are comprehensively recorded. Children are not provided with extensive opportunities to explore their community due to financial restraints. The building is not fit for purpose which means disabled access to places like kitchens and dining rooms are limited.

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 Provider(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Reg.	Requirement	Due date
31 (2001)	ensure the premises used for the purposes of a children's home is of a physical design and layout which are suitable	20/01/2012

	for the purpose of achieving the aims and objectives set out in the home's Statement of Purpose.	
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*These requirements are subject to a statutory requirement notice.

Recommendations

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

- ensure there are ample opportunities for children to participate in a range of appropriate leisure activities, and allocates sufficient financial resources to fund leisure activities and trips (NMS 15.1)
- ensure the placement plan for each child sets out clearly their health needs specifically in relation to epilepsy (NMS 2.1)
- ensure risk assessments are carried out, recorded in writing and regularly reviewed (NMS 26.2)
- ensure visits carried out under regulation 33 provide opportunities for any member of staff to meet with the visitor (in private if they wish).(NMS 32.2)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

This home provides a valuable and essential short break service to both children and their families. Children are enabled to develop socially with their peer group and participate in new life experiences. Children 'have fun' at this home as one manager stated. They are encouraged to enhance their independent living skills and so enable them to successfully transition to adult life. Managers and staff are very clear about how they improve the lives of children in their care. A crucial outcome for some children is that by accessing this short break service, children are able to remain in the family home. Children enjoy the opportunities provided by this home which enable them to thrive.

Managers and staff have close working links with other professionals and agencies ensuring a holistic approach to emotional, physical and psychological health. Staff ensure children attend their respective schools and support them in their education by attending annual reviews, visiting schools and communicating regularly with teachers. Educational activities such as art and crafts, games and reading are carried out after school supporting children in their education. Children's achievements are celebrated and their art work decorates the walls of the home. Staff value the progress children make and work with families and schools to promote continuity and consistency to ensure children can achieve in all areas of their lives.

Quality of care

The quality of care is **good**.

Staff know and understand the needs of the children well. They know when they are happy and not so happy. They enable children to express their views and feelings through the knowledge and understanding they have of them as well as by using a range of communication aids such as signs, symbols and photographs. The way a child communicates is clearly understood by staff. Staff are knowledgeable about a child's cultural and religious needs and ensure they provide care that is sensitive to those needs. Care planning documents, however, do not comprehensively detail all the needs of children, for example, what a child's epileptic episode looks like.

Children are kept active in the home, where they are given choices about the activities they would like to do such as art work, outdoor play, reading and so on. However, activities in the community are limited due to lack of funding. This often limits choices, staff seeking out free activities in the community such as walks in the local parks. This means children do not access the community as fully as they could and opportunities for children to participate in a wide range of activities is limited.

The home is of a poor design and is not fit for purpose. It is old and tired looking. Rooms such as some bedrooms, the dining rooms and kitchens are too small making access difficult for disabled children. A room with a ball pool is also used to store equipment. The activity room is accessed by a narrow corridor which also leads to the laundry room. Outdoor play space has been decreased as some land that was used by the home has been sold off for property development making the outdoor play space too small, especially for the older children. Staff make the most of what they have and children adapt well to the limited space so the impact on children is currently minimal.

Children and young people are safe and feel safe

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

Children who access this service are safe. Managers and staff are competent in their knowledge of safeguarding children ensuring they are protected from harm. Staff know and understand the risks associated with each child and are proactive with risk management. However, risk assessments are not comprehensive or reviewed regularly. This currently has little impact on children as the staff team know the children well. However, new staff may rely more heavily on written risk assessments.

There are no incidents of children going missing from this home but there is a joint protocol with the police which would be followed if required. Staff discussed bullying in the home and agreed that bullying does not occur in its true sense. However, a child may make a noise, for example, that irritates another child. Staff act appropriately in these incidences, where children are distracted or moved to another room. However, groups are carefully thought about and children usually come in together with other children that they get on well with.

Staff provide opportunities for children to make complaints in their monthly children's meetings and on a day-to-day basis, informally with staff. There have been no complaints made by either children, parents or others such as neighbours. However, staff are fully aware of the complaints procedure and managers would ensure complaints are properly addressed and resolved quickly and effectively.

Staff and children have good relationships. They promote positive behaviour and foster a supportive and proactive approach towards behaviour management. Staff manage behaviour that challenges in a calm and professional manner following comprehensive behaviour management plans. Staff are trained in physical intervention and only use it as a last resort. There are very few incidents recorded that involve physical intervention.

There are comprehensive health and safety checks carried out in the home ensuring the environment is physically safe and secure. Children are protected by the home's procedures for selecting and vetting new staff.

Leadership and management

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

This home is effectively and efficiently managed. There is a strong leadership and management team who provide staff with clear and consistent guidance. Managers have ensured that any requirements or recommendations made at previous inspections are complied with. At the previous inspection, managers were asked to review the frequency of supervision provided for staff. Staff report that they feel well supported and a new system of supervision is in operation which ensures supervision is carried out appropriately and effectively. Managers are continually striving for improvement to the service and engage children and parents with this process. Managers and staff are clear about the home's aims and objectives. This is comprehensively detailed in the home's Statement of Purpose which is regularly reviewed.

The organisation supports staff training. Staff are highly qualified, professional and caring. There is a stable staff team at this home which is well supported by managers as well as by each other. Children are well supported by a sufficient number of competent staff in order to meet their needs.

There are effective quality assurance systems in place ensuring a high quality service is delivered to the children and their families. A senior member of the organisation visits the home on a monthly basis, talking to staff, children and monitoring records. However, the report does not fully reflect their visit as it does not record a summary of any discussions with staff. This does not currently have any impact on children but should be recorded to provide a full account of the conduct of the home.