

Inspection report for Children's Home

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Inspector	Tola Akinde-Hummel
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You can obtain copies of The Children Act 2004, Every Child Matters and The National Minimum Standards for Children's Services from: The Stationery Office (TSO) PO Box 29, St Crispins, Duke Street, Norwich, NR3 1GN. Tel: 0870 600 5522. Online ordering: www.tso.co.uk/bookshop

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 outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for the service.

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 children's home is owned and run by a local authority and provides short breaks for children and young people aged five to 19 with learning, sensory and physical disabilities. There are five beds available in the home to provide overnight and holiday stays. The home has recently increased the numbers of children who access the service.

The home provides a block booking period that covers week long stays during the summer holidays.

The home is situated on an estate close to transport links. It has local amenities a short distance away. Two children were using the service during the inspection. One child was out with a member of staff for the duration of the inspection and other was receiving intensive support from staff. On this occasion both children were receiving day care only.

Summary

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

This unannounced full inspection looked at the key standards under all the Every Child Matters outcomes.

The home continues to provide a high quality service to children and young people. The service has taken on additional children as part of the Aiming High agenda. This has not affected the quality of the service despite the increased workload for the staff team.

Detailed assessments and preparation are undertaken to ensure all health, social and cultural needs of children and young people are understood and managed. New and existing children and young people and their families are very pleased with the provision and the attention to detail.

Staff understand that the safety of children at all times is paramount.

Children and young people enjoy their short break. This is because they are able to exercise choice and can also rely on the innovation of staff to engage them and organise interesting things for them to do.

The staff team work with children and young people in a caring and thoughtful way. Good training and staff support facilitate this.

The manager and the deputy are well organised, reflective and committed.

One parent said of the home, 'They are hard working, accommodating, professional and have a good feeling towards the children.'

Improvements since the last inspection

There were no areas of improvement identified at the previous inspection.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Children and young people continue to enjoy well balanced and varied meals during their short break. Increased numbers of children through the Aiming High project has meant additional planning, consultation and preparation. All allergies, food preferences and cultural requirements are catered for. The home has achieved the highest rating for food handling and hygiene from independent assessors. Parents said, 'Dietary considerations are accommodated without fuss and children are treated as individuals.'

The health needs of children and young people are detailed and accessible to staff. The community health team work with the home to offer guidance, training and support where necessary. Parents and carers can be assured that the staff understand the health needs and have been appropriately trained. Staff visit and occasionally stay with children and young people who have been hospitalised and offer emotional and practical support to parents during an emergency. Staff make every effort to ensure optimum health of children and young people is maintained during a short break.

The management of medication is excellent. Parents understand the protocol and staff follow this strictly. Training and observations of staff ensure procedures are tight and good audit trails are in place.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Personal information pertaining to children and young people is kept secure. Staff understand the requirements to maintain confidentiality and share information on a need to know basis. Children and young people receive sensitive personal care and staff ensure children and young people can exercise their right to privacy.

Very few complaints are made about the service. Parents stated, 'I know how to complain but there's nothing to complain about'. There is a complaints procedure in place. The staff regularly consult with children and young people to check if the service continues to meet their needs. The home has received a number of compliments in writing from parents and other professionals for the work staff do with children and young people.

Staff working in the home have a good understanding of the need to safeguard children and young people. Training, meetings and discussions among staff, professionals and parents ensure open communication is maintained. Staff know and work within the policies and procedures in place to promote safety. One team manager said, 'The staff are very reliable and professional; they are very aware of procedures and will always follow up incidents and issues.'

Children and young people have detailed risk assessments which highlight the risks of absence, bullying, allegations and any of the areas that may compromise the safety of children and young people. Staff ensure that identified risks are minimised and all children and young people are able to have experience of a positive short break.

The staff team meet the needs of children and young people with complex and challenging behaviour. There are excellent systems in place to help manage difficult behaviour and promote socially acceptable behaviour. Staff use distraction techniques and rewards to promote positive behaviour. In managing more challenging situations, the staff support each other and take time to reflect on how they might manage similar circumstances differently. The success of their approach is evident in the low number of physical interventions and sanctions recorded. All strategies used are discussed and agreed by all parties involved with children and young people. These are periodically reviewed to make sure they remain appropriate. Children and young people according to their level of understanding have access to literature about why physical intervention might be used. The challenging behaviour training consultant and development officer continues to work closely with staff.

Children and young people stay in an environment where their health and safety is not compromised. Excellent records are kept of tests and equipment is regularly checked and serviced. Fire safety procedures and risk assessments in the home are robust with regular day and night time fire drills encompassing all staff, children and young people.

The home has not employed new staff since the previous inspection. However procedures in place for recruitment are followed in all cases and potential staff are carefully selected with detailed checks and references. In addition staff are recruited with the needs and wishes of the children and young people in mind.

Access to the building is restricted. Visitors must show their identification and are escorted around the building. Visitors must have a valid reason for gaining access and most access is granted when children and young people are not present.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Children and young people are encouraged to use various means of communication with staff. This enables individual support to be appropriately provided. Contact with

the families of children and young people provides staff with good information about how best to support them. One parent who practises their faith stated that the home values diversity and makes every effort to meet religious and cultural needs. All children and young people are assigned key workers. However all staff get to know all young people and work with them. In this way children and young people are able to develop positive relationships with a number of staff and these are not always exclusive to the key workers.

The staff in the home have developed good relationships with the schools that children and young people attend. They contribute to annual reviews and observe children in the school environment. The school and the home work together to help provide a level of continuity and consistency for the children and young people. This reduces the possibility of confusion for children and young people, particularly in the areas of behaviour management and communication. Referrals from the children's department is one route for children and young people to access the short breaks service. However school staff also identify children who would benefit from increased social interaction and parents who would benefit from a break. The head teacher of a special needs school added, 'Regular meetings with the home are really useful, they have taken on new pupils and we share information. We have also agreed on ways to reduce the burden of meetings on parents.'

Children and young people benefit from a variety of activities. The photographic diary reflects the range and the level of enjoyment they experience. Staff have established good relationships with children and young people and ensure that children and young people choose their activities during tea visits and overnight stays. These are well documented in children's meetings minutes. The facilities within the home provide as much or as little stimulation that children and young people want. Activities also encourage exercise, independent living skills and exploration. Trips in the community incorporate local facilities such as shopping, the library, parks and leisure centres. Outings organised locally and further afield are chosen by children and young people. These are fully risk assessed, well planned and staffed to ensure maximum success. Children and young people rotate the responsibility for choosing magazines to buy in the home. One parent added, ' They are very willing to please the child and help the child and the parents, they do a fantastic job.'

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Children and young people can be assured that detailed information is gathered about them over a period of time. This information is shared with staff in the home by people who know them best. All aspects of their care, support, likes and dislikes are addressed to make sure they are comfortable when they arrive for a short break.

Regular reviews of the service children and young people receive highlights positive aspects of the short break as well as any shortfalls. Parents, children and young people are encouraged to attend and participate in reviews. The methods of eliciting children and young people's views recently changed. The home made sure that

children and young people were informed in advance of this giving them the opportunity to make a decision about which programme would best suit them.

Parents and carers can maintain contact with their children during a short break if they wish to. This can take the form of discussions with staff about how loved ones are settling in or discussions directly with children and young people. one parent said, ' They knew I was anxious and were really reassuring and patient when I would call to see how he was getting on.'

Children and young people entering and moving on from the home are well supported. Preparatory work is done to help young people settle in and at a much later stage prepare to leave the service. Children and young people take as long as they need to progress to overnight stays. Staff are skilled at determining when they believe children and young people are ready to sleep away from home. Detailed observation and communication with parents and the children with disabilities team agree when this will take place. Moving on is treated in a positive way and this is celebrated.

Communication with children and young people remains a strength of the home. No staff member has the notion that a child or young person is unable to communicate. Staff will always find ways to include children and young people in decision making and elicit their views on minor and major matters. On external trips staff also use key symbols on key rings to ensure communication is maintained. The home uses various electronic and manual methods to help them understand what children and young people are expressing.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Children and young people are encouraged to improve their independence skills. Specific skills that children and young people are required to develop are detailed in their care plan and discussed at reviews. This can be from taking on some aspects of their personal care to food hygiene. Staff recognise the potential in children and young people to develop and promote this. Where appropriate children and young people learn the value of money, appropriate social skills when out in the community and keeping their rooms and the home tidy. These skills are learnt in a fun and relaxed way.

The manager has made a number of successful bids for funding. These have been used to redecorate the house, redesign the garden and provide new play equipment. This has transformed the space which now has a number of good quality fixed equipment and also new bikes and tricycles. The children and young people enjoy the new garden and have made good use of it this summer. The lounge sofas have been replaced and the sensory room is due for redesign and refurbishment this year. All improvements to the home are undertaken in full consultation with children and young people. All other areas of the home are well decorated and the home has

appropriate adaptations and equipment to support the needs of the children and young people to make them comfortable.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

Children and young people and their families receive good information from the home about the services that are provided. The Statement of Purpose has recently been updated to reflect the change in name to a short breaks residential centre and the inclusion of additional staff and their roles.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding; this view is shared by parents and carers and other professionals familiar with the service. All children and young people are treated as individuals. Access to all aspects of the service are taken into consideration for each child. Disability, communication, race, culture and religion are not viewed as barriers to accessing the service or opportunities on offer.

Shifts are well organised and staff are clear of their responsibilities during a shift. The team work well together and offer each other support. Staff members see this as a strength of the home. Staff know that the managers are available at any time for advice or guidance, one staff member commented, 'The managers have an open door policy, you can always ask them if you are unsure.'

Children and young people are supported by staff who receive a lot of training, this is welcomed by the team. Newer members of staff will undertake NVQ training. Rotas demonstrate that there are always enough members of staff to work with children and young people. There has been an increase in staff numbers to manage the additional children that access the service. One parent new to the service stated, 'The staff are well trained and know what they are doing.'

Staff receive regular relevant supervision and contribute to team meetings. Although the team are busy, they have embraced the new developments and improvements to the service. Staff are encouraged and supported to improve professionally. This assistance comes from colleagues, managers and where appropriate, external sources. The managers recognise the levels of stress that this work can trigger and make every effort to support staff.

Managers in the home have an excellent system for monitoring all significant events, complaints, sanctions, and physical interventions. One staff member commented, 'Things don't get forgotten here the managers are on the ball.'

The home has a development plan with detailed information about what they propose to achieve for the year. These plans are reviewed to prevent drift and to ensure continuous improvement is central to the service provided to the children and young people. Current plans include developing areas of the home, exploring other ways to promote cultural diversity, improvement on recycling and strengthening communications with health and education services. One member of staff said, 'The

managers are very caring, they are always thinking ahead and finding ways to do better.'

The manager has regular file audits in place to ensure all paperwork is up to date and filed correctly. Additional systems have been introduced to compliment this.