

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC033919
Inspection date	28/08/2012
Inspector	Muhammed Harunur Rashid
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	24/01/2012
--------------------------------	------------

© 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.

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 with learning, sensory and physical disabilities. There are five beds available in the home to provide overnight and holiday stays.

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 **outstanding**.

This short-break children's home is very well managed and conducted with the best interest of children and young people being the centre of its focus. There is a strong leadership and the management is well supported by a highly qualified, experienced and stable staff team. Families and professionals very much value the way staff care and support children and young people in all aspects of their welfare and development.

A particularly strong area of this service the self-evaluation of its strengths and weakness and its striving for continuous improvement. This takes into account the changing needs of the children and young people and the home works successfully with a wide range of professionals and families. As a result best possible outcomes for children and young people are achieved in many areas, such as promoting communication, health, educational attainments and developing essential life skills for the future. There are no breaches of regulation identified at this inspection.

To further improve, the home must make a minor amendment to the children's guide.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure that information provided in the children's guide is accurate by updating the address of Ofsted. (NMS 13.5)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Children and young people benefit from highly individualised care, which enables them to feel secure and achieve best outcomes, and is consistent with their care plans. Comprehensively devised short-break care plans set the targets and these are well worked towards, reached and in many cases exceeded.

During their stay all children and young people attend special schools. Staff liaise with schools regarding the care of children and young people and strive to support them to achieve and reach their potential. Parents completed Ofsted surveys and have said that their children have made significant improvements in many areas from their starting points. One parent said that, ' my child who has a learning disability has improved her reading abilities and she is now computer literate. The child also developed various social skills and confidence in life which I was unable to help her with.'

Children and young people have individualised positive behaviour management programmes and robust risk assessments which are regularly reviewed. The behaviour management programmes are devised with input from multi-disciplinary team members, such as psychologists, psychiatrists and child and adolescent mental health services. Staff use de-escalation techniques and there has been no need to impose any physical restrictive intervention for a long time. A parent stated that, before attending this service his daughter was exhibiting challenging behaviour at home but that, 'now her behaviour has improved significantly and she appears to be very calm.'

Children and young people who are unable to communicate verbally make excellent progress. Young people are able to communicate with staff and peers through various communication methods. For example, picture exchange communication symbols. Young people learn to communicate by using a wide range of computer software packages.

Children and young people make significant progress in developing various life skills and develop confidence within their dependency levels; they access a wide range of experiences. The home undertakes transition work with young people close to moving on from the service. Staff are proactive in ensuring transition visits are supported and young people understand that their time at the home will come to an end. Parents spoken to stated that their children learn to cook meals and try new foods, use computer programmes and undertake travel training; a child, for the first time, experienced visiting London by underground train. The home has made an arrangement for nine disabled children to attend the Para-Olympic games in September 2012. Parents spoken to said that they would not be able to offer such

various opportunities to their children if they were not attending this short-break service.

Quality of care

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

The short-break service is highly successful in working in partnership with children, their families, schools and professionals involved in the care of the children and young people. Such partnership working enables formulation of joint strategies and consistency in their delivery, which supports children and young people's health, education and overall progress very well.

Individualised care plans promote all aspects of children and young people's individual identity. They enjoy positive and constructive relationships with staff and each other. Staff act as role models and assist children and young people with developing a strong identity. Staff discuss issues with children and young people in their key working sessions relating to their culture, race, gender, sexuality and disabilities.

Children, young people and their parents completed Ofsted surveys and confirm that staff actively seek children's views, wishes and feelings while having their short break. Children, young people and their families are consulted in various ways, for example, through completing questionnaires and looked after children's reviews and short-break care plan reviews. Children and young people attend weekly house meetings where issues that affect their daily lives, are discussed and.

The children and young people staying in this short-break service come from a diverse community and they have substantial health care needs and various dietary requirements according to their religious, cultural and health needs. Although parents and carers retain responsibility for meeting the health needs of children and young people, the home monitors the health and well-being of children and young people during their stay as detailed in their care plans. For example, discussions are held during daily handovers and weekly staff meetings regarding any changes in the child's well-being; action plans are put in place to address and monitor any issues such as a change in eating habits or weight loss. This includes liaising with health professionals and seeking advice and guidance on the most appropriate and effective ways of caring for a child or young person.

The service emphasises healthy eating and offers a choice of meals. Staff have developed a very good resource of symbols and pictures of different foods and meals so that children and young people can communicate their needs and choices. The weekly menu provides healthy, balanced and varied diets. Staff introduce various meals to children and young people. Staff have a very good knowledge of disabled children's difficulties with eating and closely work with health professionals for advice and support about the best way to support them. Staff are provided with specialist training in the safe administration of tube feeding to those disabled children who require this. Comprehensive policies and procedures are in place with regard to the

storage and administration of medication. There is a clear audit trail of medication entering and leaving the home and all medication administered to children.

As a short-breaks service, parents remain responsible for the education of children and young people. However, staff encourage and support children and young people to attend schools during their stays at the home. Staff attend children and young people's annual educational reviews and incorporate some of the educational activities in the children and young people's care plans. Children and young people are given responsibilities for certain tasks within the home and are supported to reach specific goals identified within their care plans.

The home has a complaints policy and procedure in place. The procedure and children's guide are developed in pictorial versions. However, the home has not received any complaints recently. A parent said that, 'I have only good things to say about the home.'

The short-breaks care home is a large detached house located in an urban area. There is a large selection of toys and a spacious garden with a play house, bike shed and playground equipment. The house provides a sensory room which is well used by children and young people. Television, DVDs and music facilities, as well as art and craft equipment are provided.

A variety of outings and activities are planned for children and young people taking into consideration of their choices, and robust risk assessments are in place to ensure their welfare and safety. The home has its own minibus and staff arrange day trips to wild life parks and historical places.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Children and young people live in an environment where competent staff provide a nurturing, stable and safe environment. Staff are proactive in keeping children and young people safe at the home and in the community. Children and young people who completed the Ofsted surveys and parents spoken to said that children and young people live in a safe environment. Comprehensive child protection policies and procedures and robust risk assessments are in place to protect children and young people from harm and ensure they are safe and secure at home and during their visits into the community. The Registered Manager is the designated child protection and anti-bullying officer at the home. All staff have received child protection training and they have comprehensive knowledge and skills to protect children and young people from any safeguarding concerns. Currently there are no bullying issues. However, a comprehensive anti-bullying policy is in place. The home has an appropriate policy for safeguarding children and young people from potential harm that can be caused through internet access.

Children and young people rarely put themselves at risk by going missing from care.

The security system and high level of staff supervision eliminates this problem. However, staff are fully aware of the appropriate procedure to deal with this should it occur. Prior to the children and young people's visits into the community a risk assessment is carried out and staffing levels are determined in accordance with the potential risk factors.

Individual risk assessments are completed for all children and young people and are particularly detailed. For example, fire risk assessments include specific information about each child's response to evacuation during fire drills. Comprehensive, informative daily records are maintained that clearly indicate the child or young person's experiences while staying at the home.

Staff are carefully vetted before starting to work with children in the home. They are recruited in accordance with the recruitment policy and procedure of the local authority so as to protect vulnerable children and young people. The human resources department carries out all relevant checks including Criminal Records Bureau disclosures on staff prior to their appointments. The home does not employ any volunteers. The home has not recruited any new care staff recently.

Staff have completed health and safety training. They take necessary action to keep children and young people and themselves safe from the risk of fire and hazards. A risk assessment of the premises is in place. Staff carry out regular fire alarm testing and fire drills. All safety checks to maintain a safe environment are regularly undertaken.

Leadership and management

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

The home has a Statement of Purpose that reflects the practice and functions of the home. The children's guide is developed in a pictorial version and in a child-friendly format which provides information about the facilities available to them. However, this document requires a minor amendment and a recommendation has been made.

The local authority has comprehensive policies on the promotion of equality and diversity. Staff have completed equality and diversity training. Staff understand children and young people's individual strengths and needs. They provide a service tailored to meet the specific individual needs of young people that considers all aspects of diversity. Staff are equipped to meet young people's cultural, religious and dietary needs. Staff encourage and support young people to make personal choices and to access community resources.

The home is managed by a qualified, experienced and competent Registered Manager who is very well supported by a deputy manager who is also a qualified social worker and has management qualifications. An effective management structure is in place and accountability for all staff is clear. There are effective systems in place to monitor the quality of care and for measuring the outcomes for children and young people using the short-breaks service. The current monitoring

system delegates specific tasks to specific individuals.

Regulation 33 monitoring visits are carried out by an independent social worker. The Registered Manager monitors and signs the home's records and takes appropriate steps on issues requiring actions. She completes reports detailing the effectiveness of the monitoring of matters as set out in Schedule 6 of Regulation 34.

The home is well resourced and there is a comprehensive business plan in place for identifying planned changes in the operation or resources of the service.

The staffing levels at the home are high as children and young people have high dependency levels. The Registered Manager reviews staffing levels in accordance with the children and young people's overall needs.

Comprehensive daily handovers and shift plans enable the staff team to plan the shifts effectively. Regular staff meetings take place which promote good communication between the staff team. All staff receive regular supervision and appraisals. Staff are highly satisfied with the training they are receiving. All staff have completed their National Vocational Qualification at level 3.

Children and young people benefit from being looked after by a stable, qualified and experienced staff team. They bring varied skills to their work and enjoy engaging with children and young people. Social workers spoken to stated that, the care plans of the home are very comprehensively written and risk assessments are very robust. Staff meet children and young people's assessed needs very well. Very good communication exists between the home and children's disability and transition teams. A parent commented on an email addressed to the Registered Manager that 'you have a wealth of experience and have learned to manage (my child) so well and have a good understanding of his needs and anxieties. Also thank you for your ongoing support and help which I always find helpful.' Another parent said that the support given to her child was 'unimaginable.'

The previous requirement from the interim inspection has been met in full.

The home employs a part-time maintenance worker and the physical environment of the premises is well maintained. The home also employs a domestic assistant and the premises are clean and hygienic. In addition to this, the home also employs a part-time administrative assistant and a cook.

Each young person has an individual case record which helps them to reflect on and understand their history; they keep appropriate memorabilia of their time in the placement.

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.