

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Stella Henderson
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The children's home is owned and operated by a local authority. It is registered to offer a short breaks service to children and young people. Young people using the service have learning disabilities and many also have physical disabilities.

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**.

Young people enjoy a good standard of care during their short breaks in this home. As a result of personalised, well-planned care they make good progress in meeting their individual milestones. Young people indicate through objects of reference and their behaviours that they are safe at the home. Their parents, carers and stakeholders concur with the view that this is a safe place for young people to be cared for.

Young people benefit from visible and consistent management presence in the home. Staff are well supported and equipped to care competently for young people with complex needs. Quality assurance monitoring is effective and has led to significant improvement since the last inspection.

A recommendation is raised in order to address the one shortfall that was identified at this inspection. This is to improve recording on consultation with young people and the choices they make when staying at the home.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure all children communicate their views on all aspects of their care and

support. This is with specific reference to recording the choices that young people make. (NMS 1.3)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people's diverse and complex needs are clearly identified and met by the home's collaborative, shared approach with parents and other professionals. Parents and carers confirm they feel involved as partners in the provision of planned care for their children. There is excellent communication with parents, health care and teaching staff to ensure smooth transition between home and the short break service. This ensures young people experience continuity of care.

During their short breaks, young people continue to follow their own personalised timetables for health and education. Expectations to attend school or college are the same as for any other young person. They maintain good attendance and have support to meet their educational objectives.

Small steps in acquiring new skills or changes in behaviour represent significant progress for some young people on their short breaks. For example, in sampling new foods, sleeping patterns, communication, mobility and behaviour. A social worker commented on the, 'clear evidence of the child having improved her social skills and independence skills, and of the home working alongside parents on some complex issues'.

For others this includes learning to manage their personal care and complete domestic tasks. These developments, undertaken at a pace to suit the individual needs of young people, gives them a sense of achievement, helps to reduce dependency on others and equips them with skills for adult life.

Young people make good use of alternative communication systems to share their views and suggestions for the service, such as décor of the home, their choice of activity, food or in choosing key workers. Decisions made by young people about individual aspects of their lives are not always clearly indicated or recorded however. This means the choices they make may be overlooked.

Young people engage in a wide range of activities within the community and the home. Good use is being made of technology to provide young people with new means of communicating and learning. Refurbishment of the home and updating of equipment provides young people with stimulating opportunities to promote their skills and development.

Quality of care

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

Young people experience good quality of care delivered by staff who are responsive

to their diverse and complex needs. Careful planning, matching and attention to young people's needs and compatibility means that young people enjoy positive relationships with their peers and with staff. Some staff show excellent practice and intervention with young people, for example by reading out to them what they have put in their handover book. This demonstrates respect and regard for young people.

Highly individualised care plans are regularly reviewed with education and health colleagues. Integrated working is securely established. Partnership with parents, carers and stakeholders generates substantial benefits to young people. This includes addressing any barriers to participation. An independent reviewing officer commented that, 'there is excellent communication between the foster carers and staff and myself'.

Since the last inspection the provider has made substantial investment into facilities, resources and fabric of the home. As a result, young people enjoy the improvements made to the sensory light and sound room, bedrooms and the garden. One parent noted 'how impressed we were with the home's makeover - really inviting and cheerful'.

Robust procedures are now in place to ensure the safe administration of first aid and medication. Parents retain the main responsibility for ensuring timely health checks and arranging routine health appointments, but staff keep in very regular communication over any health matters.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

The safety of young people is given a high priority within the home. This includes being alert to young people's increased level of vulnerability and any potential risks arising from the environment and activities. Good staffing ratios mean that young people are fully supervised while still enjoying independence and privacy when they need it.

Effective arrangements safeguard and promote the welfare of young people on short breaks. Staff are suitably trained and take a proactive approach to any concerns, working closely with relevant agencies. Staff work successfully with young people to help them manage their behaviour and meet their needs for consistency and predictability in routine.

Young people are protected because all specialist equipment is regularly serviced to ensure it remains in excellent working order. There are well established and highly effective recruitment and selection processes in place to ensure a safe and competent workforce. Safe recruitment guidelines are implemented which means that young people are protected from those who are unsuitable to work with vulnerable individuals.

Leadership and management

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

Young people benefit from receiving short breaks from a service that has made significant improvement since the last inspection. A representative from education commented that there has been 'massive improvement to the home and in communication with staff'.

The very experienced acting manager, whose application for registration is lodged with Ofsted, demonstrates strong leadership. She has ensured that all requirements and recommendations have been met in relation to consultation and medication, and induction training. A social worker noted that, 'there have been significant improvements since the new manager started at the home'.

The acting manager receives excellent support from very able senior members of staff who effectively collaborate on improving the service. This, and other changes to practice, culture and fabric of the home show effective capacity and a clear agenda for improvement for the benefit of young people. Excellent development work is also undertaken to reach out to the local community to enable other young people with complex needs to benefit from the home's resources.

Comprehensive monitoring procedures ensure the standards of care practice are continually and objectively assessed, consolidated and improved upon. Records are maintained to a high standard and clearly evidence the progress and development made by each young person. All information is stored securely and in line with maintaining expectations such as protecting young people's confidentiality.

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* and the evaluation schedule for the inspection of children's homes.