

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Caroline Oldham
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home is a children's respite service registered to a local authority. It provides respite and overnight care for up to eight children and young people with learning and/or 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**.

The staff team know the young people very well, and through a variety of communication methods are able to involve them in many aspects of the running of the home. Staff provide personalised, well-planned care and each young person has a clear, detailed care plan, designed to meet their specific needs. Although this plan is followed through into the day-to-day care, this is not always well documented, however, young people are making good progress.

Parents report that young people express pleasure in their short-break stays and look forward to their visits. They say that as young people change and mature the care they are offered reflects these changes. Most behaviour is managed through gentle guidance called 'positive touch' but sometimes physical intervention is needed to stop young people harming themselves or others. This is not always well documented so it is not clear exactly for how long a young person was held.

Leaders and the manager have good systems in place to monitor progress, that meet the regulatory requirements. The senior management team are fully aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the home. The manager prepares reports that identify trends and issues of concern and the staff team are enthusiastic to make continuous improvements for young people. The staff team feel well supported however, there are times when individual staff do not always receive regular formal supervision.

Young people express the view that they feel happy and safe. To ensure that each young person is well cared for there are good risk assessments and safe working practices which consider their privacy and dignity.

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)	Where a measure of restraint is used on a child the record under paragraph (3) must include - (a) the duration of the measure of restraint (Regulation 17B (4) (a))	31/10/2013

Recommendations

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

- ensure that each child's Placement Plan is monitored by a key worker who ensures that the requirements of the plan are implemented in the day-to-day care of that child (NMS 25.2)
- ensure that staff are provided with regular supervision by appropriately qualified and experienced staff (NMS 19.4)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people use a range of communication methods and all staff have the necessary skills to communicate with the young people in their care. Consequently, young people are able to exercise choice in day-to-day matters. Young people express their pleasure in having a short break in the home through their own methods of communication. For example, they may smile with pleasure when they know they are attending for a short break, others say that they like to meet their friends.

Young people enjoy a healthy lifestyle with plenty of opportunities for exercise and a good diet. In addition special diets such as gluten free are provided. Young people learn good social skills and how to manage their feelings and emotions in an appropriate way. Home to school diaries ensure a good flow of information between all of those caring for the young people which ensures young people receive consistent care.

The outcomes for the young people are good, as they make progress in their

behaviour and have opportunities to try new activities and experiences. For some young people these would not be possible without the input of the home, for example, going on outings to theme parks. This helps young people to grow in confidence, to cope with busy environments and access public places. Due to staff building up relationships and working with young people to develop appropriate behaviours, they are able to develop their social skills and take part in community activities. Staff work hard to give consistent messages and work together, for example, they set clear expectations for some young people that they must not leave the table whilst others are still eating. There is evidence that the way staff work with young people has improved young people's social skills. Where possible their independence skills are promoted through activities such as developing skills in self-care, simple food preparation and domestic chores.

Quality of care

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

The staff have a very good knowledge and understanding of the young people in their care, and this helps them to form strong, sound relationships with the young people. Staff are skilled at communicating with young people according to their preferred methods of communication this ensures that young people's wishes are met and they feel understood and respected. Where possible, young people are involved in decisions that affect the day-to-day running of the home, such as choosing their duvet covers, planning meals and organising activities. Short break stays are arranged to ensure that friendships are facilitated, and so young people form friendships with others within the home.

All young people have short-break placement plans that set out their specific, individualised needs. The plans include any relevant information about their disability and medical requirements, and where appropriate any religious and cultural considerations. There are positive behaviour support plans which are used in conjunction with the risk assessments. These include details of any early warning signs of distress and pro-active strategies for intervention. Some excellent detailed individual development target setting work is in place, and key workers implement this in practice. However, day-to-day documentation fails to record the progress that young people are making. This information is necessary to inform the next review and further plans. . Therefore currently the documentation fails to demonstrate the progress of the targets set for the young people in their day-to-day care.

Social workers and parents speak very highly of the home and the care that the staff provide. Parents say 'I am at ease because I know that the staff know how to look after my son'. Social workers all confirm that they are kept informed, and say that the staff are 'brilliant, knowledgeable and work together'. They confirm that staff are knowledgeable about children with disabilities, who really care about what they do and the service they provide.

Staff work closely with all health professionals, and seek their expert advice appropriately. Staff receive specialist training for administering some medication.

Young people enjoy the freshly cooked food and any dietary restrictions and allergies are taken into consideration when planning menus. Young people have opportunities for exercise such as trips to the park, swimming, specialist play equipment both inside and outside. Consequently, children's health needs are well met.

The home is well placed close to the centre of the town, which is served well by public transport. There are shops and other facilities close by. The layout is spacious, allowing for two homely areas to meet the differing needs of the young people. Self-portraits painted by the young people and wall murals add a welcoming touch to the environment. Outside there is an area for bike and karts and well as a sand tray. The home is well cared for, with any maintenance requirements quickly dealt with, to ensure the home remains welcoming and safe for young people.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

There are comprehensive risk assessments for each young person, these include safe care plans and personal handling risk assessments. Plans detail young people's general vulnerabilities, and their sense of danger such as road safety awareness. Staff carefully monitor young people in the home and when out in the community; this keeps them safe. Young people never go missing due to the high staffing levels and good strategies in place. Staff are vigilant to ensure that young people do not harm themselves or others. However, on very rare occasions when incidents occur, risk assessments are revised to prevent any re-occurrence. Consequently, young people are protected and kept safe.

All staff receive safeguarding training and regular refresher training, with a focus on the specific issues of safeguarding children and young people with disabilities. Staff are very clear about how they would deal with any issues of concern, and emphasise that the needs of the child are paramount. If there is any allegation of concern, this is quickly responded to and action is taken. Staff are aware of the possibilities of bullying and keep young people safe through good staffing levels and supervision. This ensures that young people are kept safe and cared for appropriately.

Staff work with social workers, parents and other professionals to ensure consistent care and set simple targets for behaviour. These might be to remain calm whilst playing on the computer, sit at the table during meal times, or settle at night. Sanctions and physical restraints are very rare as most behaviour is managed by gentle guidance, or talking to the young person. However, documentation for physical interventions does not always detail for how long a young person is held. By staff working consistently with others, young people's behaviour gradually improves over time, and young people make progress given their starting points.

The staff recruitment and selection process is good, and comprehensive checks are made to ensure that young people are always cared for by appropriately experienced staff. There have been few changes to the staff team since the last inspection, which ensures that children and young people are cared for by a consistent team of staff

who know them well.

The home is well maintained. Services such as electricity, electrical appliances and fire fighting equipment are regularly checked by the appropriate professional companies. Quarterly fire drills are carried out at different times of the day and evening and there are individual risk assessments for each young person with regard to evacuation in an emergency.

Leadership and management

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

The registered manager and her senior team are well respected by the staff team. The staff rota shows high staffing levels which are tailored to meet the needs of the individual young people and the activities offered. Waking night staff ensure this high level of care is continued throughout the night, so that those who have poor sleep patterns are well monitored. The staff say that they work well together, and strive to provide a consistent approach in their work. Social workers and parents confirm that there is good communication between staff members.

All staff receive the mandatory training and specialist health care training pertinent to the care of the young people attending the home, in addition, staff are enabled to attend specialist training. All staff are suitably qualified or working towards professional qualifications. The home is financially well resourced.

Staff are very clear about their roles, and say that they are very well supported and encouraged to express their ideas and views. For example they create wall murals and explore new ways of working such as 'Positive Play'. They talk with passion about their work and the progress that the young people make whilst in their care. Team meetings are monthly and provide good opportunities for team discussions, including training and progress updates. Although all staff receive supervision, this is not always on a regular basis, however, informal support is always available. This means that individual developmental issues, training needs and work stresses could be missed or overlooked by managers.

The responsible individual carries out thorough monthly quality assurance monitoring visits under Regulation 33. The Registered Manager carries out comprehensive checks and reviews of the quality of care provided which comply with Regulation 34; these include an assessment of concerns about specific incidents and monitoring and identifying patterns and trends. They are submitted to HMCI at six monthly intervals. The manager has a good grasp of how the home is operating; its strengths and weaknesses, and there is a comprehensive development plan in place. The Statement of Purpose gives a good overview of the home. It contains all the required information to give parents and the local authority clear information about the aims and objectives of the home and the facilities and services that are provided.

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.