

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC037647
Inspection date	27/11/2013
Inspector	Sharon Lloyd
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	07/03/2013
--------------------------------	------------

© Crown copyright 2013

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

This is a local authority children's home providing short breaks for up to four children with learning or physical disabilities. Most of the children staying for short breaks are not in the care of the local authority and their parents have the primary responsibility for their health care and education.

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**.

Children and young people are very well looked after at this centre for short breaks. They receive effective, high quality support from competent and well-trained staff. The centre is well led and appropriately staffed. On-going developments take into account parents' views and ensure continuous improvement of the service. Staff provide a warm, nurturing environment where children and young people feel relaxed and enjoy interacting with staff and peers. The centre adds to their development and significantly enhances their quality of life through providing opportunities to participate in a wide range of interesting and relaxing activities. The safety and welfare of children and young people are given high priority and this ensures children and young people are kept safe and their health and welfare are well promoted.

Breaches in regulations resulting from shortfalls in record keeping do not impact on the welfare of children and young people. A failure to hold records of agency staff members' qualifications and experience on file means that the home does not have all the information it needs to demonstrate the suitability of agency workers. Recommendations for good practice are to further improve communication with children and young people to ensure that as many as possible can make their views known and know how to complain and what to do in the event of a fire. A further recommendation is made to improve the way in which staff support young people to develop an understanding of their emerging sexuality.

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
24 (2001)	ensure that a written record is made of any complaint, the action taken in response and the outcome of the investigation. In particular, ensure that entries in this record are clear (Regulation 24 (5))	28/12/2013
4 (2001)	ensure that the Statement of Purpose contains the correct address and telephone number of HMCI (Regulation 4 (3) (c))	28/12/2013
29 (2001)	maintain a record in respect of each member of staff working at the home which includes qualifications relevant to and experience of work involving children. In particular, ensure these details are held in records relating to agency staff members and are retained for at least 15 years from the date of the last entry. (Regulation 29 (1)(2))	28/12/2013

Recommendations

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

- ensure that all information in the children's guide is presented in a format suitable to the communication needs of the children and young people. In particular, ensure that information on how to make a complaint and how to contact an independent reviewing officer, the Children's Rights Director, Ofsted and an independent advocate is made clear by using alternative methods of communication (NMS 13.5, 13.6)
- ensure that all staff and as many children and young people as possible are familiar with the emergency escape plan, have practised it and know what to do in the event of an emergency (NMS 10.9)
- increase the use of alternative methods of communication so that as many children and young people as possible can contribute their views on all aspects of their care and support (NMS 1.3)
- support children and young people to develop positive and appropriate social and sexual relationships. In particular, support young people to understand their emerging sexuality. (NMS 12.1)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Children and young people look forward to their visits to this respite centre where they have fun participating in a range of activities and outings. The level of positive attention that staff provide ensures that children and young people get the most out of their short stays. The more able young people improve their social skills and become more self-reliant, gaining independence skills through opportunities to shop, cook and engage in routine household tasks. They benefit from interacting with their peers in a well-structured and relaxed environment.

Young people contribute to decisions about their daily living. For example, they make choices about meals, snack and drinks and they choose how they spend their time, including where to go on outings. A small number of children and young people use alternative methods of communication but there is limited use of these at the centre. Where pictures and photographs are used, this enhances children and young people's ability to contribute to decisions about their daily lives and make changes within the centre. Plans are in place to increase the use of alternative communication methods but as yet they are not widely used. This restricts young people's ability to communicate as effectively as possible.

Children and young people particularly enjoy going out on trips to parks, the seaside and shopping. They enjoy new experiences and engaging with other members of the community and they learn socially acceptable behaviour. Children and young people engage in activities that interest them. For example, some children who love to watch the boats are taken to the docks to do this; others who like aeroplanes enjoy going to the viewing area of the local airport. Some of the older young people enjoy looking at jewellery and having age-appropriate 'pampering' or make-up sessions. The staff team focuses on providing activities where young people can have shared experiences and through this, young people become more aware of each other's needs and less isolated.

Children and young people with complex and profound disabilities enjoy using a sensory unit which emits varying lights and colours. Those who are able to use the remote control benefit from having an opportunity to have some control over their environment.

By contributing to displays of artwork in the centre and the garden, children and young people develop self-esteem and take pride in their work. They are assisted to develop self-care skills and staff give them time and encouragement to promote this. Children and young people strengthen their muscles, improve their mobility and stamina and develop confidence in their physical abilities when they play in the safe and secure garden which has a safe ground covering, a ground level trampoline and outdoor play equipment.

Children and young people learn to try new foods and improve their eating habits because the home works closely with parents and schools to ensure that as far as possible, they have a healthy diet. Staff respect children and young people's dignity and are sensitive to their need for privacy when delivering personal care. Staff are

aware of young people's emerging sexuality but their expertise in assisting young people to embrace this stage of their lives is limited and this means that opportunities to develop meaningful relationships with others may be limited.

Quality of care

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

Children and young people are comfortable in the relaxed and friendly atmosphere and benefit from warm and positive relationships with staff. Parents say that children and young people tell them they enjoy their short stays. They also say, 'the staff are wonderful', and, 'nothing is too much trouble'. Children and young people respond well to positive communication and constructive interventions. Staff promote socially acceptable behaviour and reduce challenging and unsafe behaviour with skill, patience and consistency.

Effective placement planning ensures that children and young people are introduced to the service at their own pace. Children and young people and their parents develop confidence in the staff team before the first overnight stay. Personalised care packages meet the identified needs of each child and young person. The home maintains close liaison with parents and school through the school-home diary and this ensures a smooth transition for children between their home, school and the respite centre. Staff ensure that young people arrive at school on time in the mornings and they transport children and young people to school when this is in their best interests.

Staff are ever alert to young people's moods and take action to allay their anxieties and ensure that as far as possible, children and young people enjoy the time they spend at the respite centre. Staff achieve a good balance between providing a range of appropriate activities and time for relaxation. Children and young people benefit from personalised routines and care that meet their individual needs and wishes. Staff encourage and enable children and young people to make choices. Feedback from parents is extremely positive and they recognise that children and young people enjoy their time at the centre and look forward to their visits. Parents value the high quality care provided. They report that this enables them to trust the home and to relax in the knowledge that children and young people are safe and happy there. Quotes from parents include: 'The care is excellent'; 'The staff are very friendly'; and 'All his needs are catered for'.

Health and safety are a high priority. All staff understand the importance of good hygiene and infection control, and the home's routines promote children and young people's good health. Strict and careful medicine administration procedures ensure that children and young people receive the medicines and treatment they need. Where children and young people develop an illness during their stay, staff take action to notify parents promptly and monitor children's health carefully. They seek medical advice as required. The home only administers prescribed medication and this means that on occasion, there has been a delay in children receiving treatment for a high temperature as the parent is called in to administer this. To address this,

the home has consulted with the community nurse. This has led to the development of a new policy about using pain relief and temperature control medicines. Individual health plans are currently under review so that pain relief may be given in future where this has been agreed with parents and doctors.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Children and young people's safety is prioritised and they are kept safe. The friendly staff team creates a warm and welcoming atmosphere where children and young people visibly relax. They manage young people's behaviour through calm and clear communication and lots of praise for acting appropriately. Restraint and sanctions are rarely used and only to ensure the safety of young people and staff. These incidents are carefully monitored and reviewed. This ensures that children and young people's behaviour is managed well.

Children and young people do not go missing from this home because staff follow good procedures and individual behaviour management plans to ensure their safety. Staffing ratios are raised as necessary to meet the individual needs of young people.

Outings are planned carefully, taking account of individual young people's awareness of their own personal safety and this means that all young people have the opportunity to enjoy outings in the community. The layout of the home ensures that young people are well supervised and facilities are tailor-made to meet the needs of those with a wide range of physical disabilities; for example, hoists, closed circuit television and specialist beds are available for children and young people with particular special needs.

Staff are trained in fire safety and evacuation procedures and fire drills take place every six months. There have been no fire drills in the home at night for over 12 months so a high number of staff have not had the opportunity to practice emergency evacuation procedures for over 12 months.

Careful selection and recruitment procedures ensure that staff employed to work at the centre are fully vetted and everything possible is done to ensure their suitability. Agency staff are subject to similar checks and the provider has developed a protocol with the agency to ensure that these staff are well vetted and trained. The home does not hold all of the required information on agency staff. For example, it does not always hold written details of their qualifications and experience of working with children and young people. This undermines the effectiveness of staff suitability checks.

Leadership and management

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

The Registered Manager competently leads and supports a team of dedicated, well

trained and suitably qualified staff. He effectively quality assures the operation of the home and drives improvement. The home takes action to address any shortfalls in the service promptly so that it continues to provide a high standard of care to children and young people. The home consults with parents regularly and feedback about the service is excellent. Parents' suggestions for improvement are taken seriously and are used to further enhance the quality of care. For example, in response to suggestions from parents, more drivers have been trained to drive the minibus and brief reports are sent home following each short stay so parents are well informed about what children and young people have been doing. The capacity to improve is good. The actions raised at the last inspection have been addressed. This means that the quality of monitoring reports has significantly improved since the last inspection.

The home meets the aims and objectives outlined in the Statement of Purpose very well. It is appropriately resourced and staffed to meet the wide and varying needs of the children and young people who use the service. Significant incidents are notified to the appropriate people and the Registered Manager reviews the home's response and actions taken. He works with other professionals to identify any areas for improvement and updates the home's practice accordingly. This ensures children and young people receive the best possible service. Complaints are appropriately dealt with but the complaints log book does not clearly demonstrate the nature and outcome of every complaint.

There is high quality information available to inform parents, children and young people about the home. The children's guide is tailored to meet the individual needs of children and young people. However, it does not contain information about how to complain in a format that meets young people's communication needs. The Statement of Purpose does not contain the correct contact details for HMCI so parents and others who rely on this information would not be able to contact the regulator.

Case files for children and young people contain all the required information and give a clear indication of each child or young person's needs and progress. Case records are well maintained but the detail of routine recording does not always demonstrate how actions identified in case reviews are addressed. The Registered Manager has initiated a programme of refresher training for all staff to promote improvements in the quality of recording.

The home is well laid out and domestic in style. It provides homely accommodation and suitable facilities for children and young people with a range of physical and learning disabilities. Specialist equipment is available to meet the needs of children and young people with varying degrees of physical disability. The outdoor play space has been developed to provide a safe and secure play area. Children and young people contribute to the décor in both in the house and garden, which is teenage-friendly.

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.