

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC042978
Inspection date	13/07/2011
Inspector	Mark Ryder
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	08/02/2011
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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.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: a service that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

Good: a service that exceeds minimum requirements

Satisfactory: a service that only meets minimum requirements

Inadequate: a service that does not meet minimum requirements

Service information

Brief description of the service

The home provides short breaks for young people with learning disabilities and physical disabilities. It provides short breaks for up to five young people at any time from 5 years to 17 years of age. A total of 43 young people use the service.

Overall effectiveness

The overall effectiveness is judged to be **outstanding**.

Children experience an excellent and well-organised service that continuously adapts to improve and develop what the home can offer. Children are treated with respect and dignity and are central to the decisions that affect their lives. Consultation is one of the key practices within this service. Parents, social workers and other allied professionals all comment on how the service helps to improve the lives of children. A social worker said 'staff work within the children's own world and are thus effective in supporting them in all aspects of their care.'

The home has a history of outstanding practice that is both reflected within previous statutory Ofsted inspections and internal audits of the home's functions and progress. The management of the service has developed an effective quality assurance process that captures the views of parents, stakeholders and children. This has enabled the home to continue to improve the services for children with complex health and learning needs.

Despite this short break home going through a significant reorganisation it has not lost the focus on delivering a very high standard of care. A child wrote that staff 'look after me brilliantly'

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Exceptional levels of care and support from experienced and motivated staff enable children to maximise their individual potential. Parents, schools and the short break service work well together in helping children with complex learning and physical needs to achieve in all aspects of their lives. For example, some children are helped and encouraged to use cutlery during meals with very positive results.

There are close working relationships with the schools to help promote a continuity of care. Communication books record any issues which need to be shared with and by parents, teachers and care staff. A social worker commented that the staff at this home are very good at working in partnership with parents and other allied professionals. Close working relationships with stakeholders has the benefit of promoting a stimulating 24-hour curriculum with the outcome of improvements to the lifestyles of children. For example, the use of a range of communication methods to help children express their wishes and feelings. A child wrote that 'the home is perfect'.

There are specific and measurable targets for children to develop independent living skills which are reviewed every six months. Targets identify areas in a child's life which would benefit them and that are achievable. For example, many children are encouraged to vocalise their requests rather than point. This engenders a culture in which children excel in developing their language skills.

Quality of care

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

Children receive a service that is both imaginative and stimulating enabling children to fully participate in their own care arrangements. For example, consultation is strongly promoted by staff through encouraging children to make lifestyle choices such as choice of bedrooms, activities and decoration.

Staff manage complaints well. Parents and children are fully aware of the process in making a complaint and feel that if they need to raise any concerns that staff respond to them promptly. For children with specific learning needs, staff are able to identify a child's anxieties through observation and different communication systems. Complaint records are reviewed regularly and action taken to further develop the service. For example, changing a care plan to include essential information about a child's personal care arrangements. Equally the home encourages parents and other stakeholders to comment on any positive aspects of the home. This has been useful in gauging how, for example, social workers see the recent developments to the interior and exterior of the home.

Care plans are current and reflect the assessed needs of children well. Parents and children are consulted about the planning of the care provided and are always invited to reviews and planning meetings. Records include how individuality is to be promoted within the home taking into consideration race, gender, disability and religion. Parents feel they play a central role in the decisions about their children during their short break time. A parent wrote 'I feel confident that my child is looked after as I would as a mother'

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Children are safe at this short break home. Staff provide children with a safe and highly stimulating environment during their stay. Risk assessments are current, informative and regularly reviewed in line with presenting needs. For example, each outing is assessed based on children's known presenting behaviour.

Safeguarding guidance and procedures are fully integrated within all aspects of practice within this setting. Staff are knowledgeable and highly competent in recognising and responding to children's welfare. A social worker commented that the staff are particularly good at working in partnership with social workers and referring any concerns in line with statutory guidance.

Relationships between staff and children are friendly, nurturing and positive. Children respond well to the boundaries that are effectively put in place by well-trained and experienced staff. Assessment of each child's behaviour and the strategies required to reduce the need for physical restraint are well developed. Staff understand how to manage children's behaviour in a non-threatening and positive way. Behaviour management records reflect how staff intervene to reduce such behaviour. Such records are regularly monitored by the Registered Manager. Many children interact positively with the staff. A young person said 'I like the staff here.'

Incidents of children missing from this home are very infrequent due to their potential vulnerability and the need for constant supervision. However, the staff are aware of the local protocol with the emergency services if such an incident was to occur. This is well risk assessed.

Staff work closely with children and effectively reduce any potential conflict between them. For example, if two children are known not to respond well together, they are given different short break dates or are engaged in different activities during their stay. This minimises the risk of potential bullying. Parents comment that they feel their children are safely cared for.

Recruitment and selection of staff is conducted in a way that supports the provider's Statement of Purpose and function. Staff are robustly recruited to identify and employ those individuals that will effectively work with children in a safe and suitable way.

The home environment is safe and suitably checked to ensure electrical and gas appliances are routinely maintained. Fire safety is managed well. A recent fire inspection identified no concerns with regards to the safety and operation of the fire risk assessment. Staff receive training and periodic drills on safe evacuation procedures.

Leadership and management

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

The management arrangements effectively meet the needs of children in a safe, stimulating and supportive way. There is a well-developed monitoring and quality assurance process that helps to develop the service continuously. For example, parents and social workers have recorded their views on the recent refurbishment plans and how they have enriched the environment for children. There were no recommendations or statutory requirements made at the last inspection.

Staff training is excellent. There are regular opportunities for staff to complete both mandatory and specialist courses that enable children to be cared for safely and well. Internal and external courses are well received. Staff feel the management team supports their professional development in all aspects of their roles. Staff have knowledge of and are highly skilled in working with children with complex learning and health needs. The staff view children with disabilities as individuals who have a right to experience all that a child without a disability would expect. In this regard the ethos of the service continues to adopt a social model of disability and is progressive in meeting the high aspirations of all children who require a short break.

Staff are highly competent, skilled and experienced in working with children with complex learning and medical needs. They promote children's wishes and feelings in all areas of their care. Exceptionally motivated and enthusiastic staff provide a stimulating and safe environment for children using the service. Staff feel very well supported by a flexible and accessible management team. This is fully reflected within monthly monitoring reports conducted by a senior member of staff from the organisation. A parent said 'the staff here are excellent'.

Equality and diversity practice is **outstanding**.