

Inspection report for Children's Home

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Inspector	Julian Parker
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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.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for the service.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding:	this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality
Good:	this aspect of the provision is strong
Satisfactory:	this aspect of the provision is sound
Inadequate:	this aspect of the provision is not good enough

Service information

Brief description of the service

The home is owned by a registered charity. It provides respite care and short breaks for children who have a learning disability or a social and communication disability within the autistic spectrum. Children may also have associated physical disabilities. The home is a purpose-built, six bedroom bungalow situated in a small town about 15 miles from a large city. There are public transport links into the city. Children continue to attend their schools during their stay.

Each child has a single bedroom, four of which have en-suite facilities. There are two bathrooms, one equipped with a 'Parker' bath. Communal accommodation comprises of a dining room, lounge, sensory room and games/play room. There is a staff office and kitchen. There is an enclosed garden with a range of play equipment and car parking is to the front of the house.

One child was present during this inspection.

Summary

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

This is an overview of what the inspector found during the inspection.

The purpose of this unannounced interim inspection was to follow up the recommendations made at the last inspection and to assess key standards under the outcome area of staying safe. The short breaks unit provides a very valuable level of practical support to young people with diverse needs and regular respite for their families. Very effective safeguarding practice and in-house systems actively promote the well-being of children and young people. Socially-acceptable behaviour is encouraged and managed positively. Young people respond positively to needs-led staffing levels and the incentives used by the home that support them to develop their understanding and abilities. Young people make their views known through their behaviour and many different forms of communication being used to show that they are listened to. The home environment is being maintained and developed to a high standard. Regular routines and systems are in place to ensure that the necessary and required health and safety checks to confirm that the home and practice is safe. Management and leadership is effective in confirming the high quality of service being provided and looking for innovative ways of improving the provision.

This report confirms the continuing high quality, safety and consistent care being provided by this proactive short breaks unit.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection no actions or recommendations were made

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is not judged.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

The safety and welfare of children and young people using the service are actively promoted by the home's staffing complement of competent and trained staff. Professional practice is underpinned by training aligned to safeguarding children with disabilities, promoting socially-acceptable behaviour while maintaining environmental and individual health and safety.

The right of children and young people for privacy and personal autonomy is well respected by their carers. High levels of confidentiality are maintained by sensitive personal information being stored carefully and communicated discretely with other professionals and children's parents. Privacy for children and young people is enhanced by the use of en-suite and specially equipped bedrooms and bathrooms. Sensitivity is shown by the service when addressing all aspects of intimate and personal care. Young people are spoken about respectfully by their carers by being referred to as 'guests'.

The management of behaviour is centred upon staff presenting a comprehensive knowledge of individual young people, their preferred mode of communication and knowing how to best enable children with their particular limitations from their presenting disabilities. Staff actively encourage and praise acceptable behaviour. Staffing levels in the unit and throughout the day are set within safe, risk-assessed levels that enable each young person to feel comfortable and protected at all times.

Children and young people are helped to communicate and understand the behaviour being expected from them during their stay. Social routines are planned to help make the short stay stimulating and enjoyable whether on site or out on recreational visits. Care staff treat children and young people respectfully by recognising individual progress. This quality of caring promotes behavioural stability, ensuring the relative absence of sanctions and physical controls. Any emerging incidents are rare, but when they do occur they are managed sensitively, recorded well and always discussed with parents.

To ensure that children and young people are kept safe from their behaviour or that of other children staff receive regular statutory training in behaviour management including that for the safe and restricted application of physical restraint. Training,

using a nationally accredited restraint methodology, is refreshed in accordance with the timescales prescribed for the client group. All incidents of use are fully recorded and evaluated by the home's manager and the provider's external systems for monitoring practice. All staff receive clear guidance and instruction about how such incidents are to be recorded.

Care staff respond effectively to any concerns or complaints young people or their families may have. These are addressed effectively long before they become a formal complaint. All are investigated with young people, with their parents being fully involved and informed in writing of outcomes. There have been only minor complaints since the last inspection, identifying the positive and swift response by this service in ensuring that young people's feelings and their welfare are sensitively prioritised.

The potential for bullying is taken very seriously by the short breaks service. Where appropriate, such issues are discussed generally between staff and young people. The vulnerability of young people with disabilities is fully assessed and actively considered as part of the matching process when arranging individual stays at the unit. Risk assessments establish the risk of young people being the victim of bullying or presenting behaviour that affects others. Young people are made aware of the expectations being made from them by key working staff and from the unit's talking photo album. Parents are kept apprised of their children's behaviour when away from home.

The unit adheres to statutory procedures relating to young people going missing without authority. The high vulnerability level of this client group makes any such absence a significant concern that is guarded against vigilantly. Staffing levels are high and there have been no such incidents. Staff are clear about the process of notifying parents and other agencies should such circumstances arise. Domestic security arrangements at the home are robust and effectively deter unauthorised absences from the building. Risk assessments for outings ensure that staffing and supervision levels are sufficient to prevent any opportunistic unauthorised absence. Robust reporting systems are in place should this occur. In these ways the well-being of 'guests' are safeguarded thoroughly.

The short breaks service fully complies with the registered providers and relevant placing authority health and safety procedures. Staff receive training in safe moving and handling. Overhead hoists, modified beds, specialised bathing areas and access to a mobile manual hoist facilitate safe personal handling practices. The maintenance of equipment and hoists is conducted with regularity. All precautionary fire safety checks and drills are conducted within prescribed frequencies. All areas of practice are effectively risk assessed. The home's insurance is compliant with regulatory requirements but its written contents lacks some detail to comply fully with national minimum standards.

Young people are safeguarded practically by the registered provider's effective systems for the monitoring of all visitors to the home. No stranger is allowed access without an appointment or showing personal identification. Appropriate measures are

in place to ensure young people do not have unsupervised contact with any official visitor or stranger.

The registered provider's recruitment and selection process asserts that no staff member would start working with children being looked after ahead of all of the prescribed suitability checks being completed and cleared. Personnel recruitment records include updating Criminal Records Bureau checks for all new and established staff. The Registered Manager confirmed that all new staff appointed since the last inspection staff have been checked thoroughly and cleared, confirming their suitability, qualification and experience before being allowed to work at the short breaks unit.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is not judged.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is not judged.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is not judged.

Organisation

The organisation is not judged.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Recommendations

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

- ensure that the certificate of insurance identifies the home by name and address. (NMS 26.9.)