

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC060034
Inspection date	11/09/2013
Inspector	Louisa Bayley
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	25/03/2013
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home is owned by a registered charity. It provides respite care and short breaks for up to six children at any one time, who have a learning disability or a social and communication disability within the autistic spectrum. Children may also have associated 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 with complex health needs and disabilities benefit from positive and rewarding short breaks in this home. The staff are committed to ensuring that all young people, regardless of disability, have equality of access to high quality social experiences and opportunities. The highly individualised care planning, gradual introductions and structured transitions ensure young people enjoy their short breaks. Parents and professionals identify that young people make good progress as a result of the support they receive during their short breaks.

Staff have genuinely warm and caring relationships with young people; supporting them to develop their skills and confidence in a safe and nurturing environment. Young people enjoy their stays and parents say that their children are happy to go to the home and are happy upon their return. Parents are confident that staff keep their children safe. This does not preclude young people from taking risks proportionate to growing, developing and discovering their own potential and their likes and dislikes.

There is strong leadership in the home; managers identify and understand areas they need to develop further, promoting a culture of continual improvement. There is an ethos of creativity amongst the team, challenging stereotypes and assumptions about disability. Consequently, staff adopt a can-do approach, setting high expectations for young people to help them achieve their potential.

Minor shortfalls identified during the inspection relate to recording of sanctions, out

of date staffing information in the Statement of Purpose and a lack of current information in one health plan. These shortfalls have not affected the safety or well-being of any young person and have not compromised positive outcomes.

An area identified for improvement relates to staff accessing training in a range of communication methods. Staff identify this as a necessary resource to equip them with the additional skills they need to enhance their work with the young people in their care.

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
5 (2001)	keep under review and, where appropriate, revise the statement of purpose and the children's guide and notify HMCI of any such revision within 28 days (Regulation 5 (a)(b))	31/10/2013
17B (2001)	ensure that within 24 hours of the use of any measure of control, discipline or restraint in a children's home, a written record is made in a volume kept for the purpose which shall include all matters required in Regulation 17B (Regulation 17B (3) (a-i))	31/10/2013
20 (2001)	promote and protect the physical, emotional and mental health of the children accommodated in a children's home, with specific regard to ensuring that health plans accurately reflect the most up-to-date prescription of medications. (Regulation 20 (1))	31/10/2013

Recommendations

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

- ensure there is a good quality learning and development programme which staff and volunteers are supported to undertake. It includes induction, post-qualifying and in-service training to enhance individual skills and to keep staff up-to-date with professional and legal developments. Staff are equipped with the skills required to meet the needs of the children and purpose of the setting, and training keeps them up-to-date with professional, legal and practice developments and reflects the policies, legal obligations and business needs of the home (NMS 18.1)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **outstanding**.

Young people develop highly positive relationships with staff due to structured transitions, individualised routines and consistency between the staff, parents and schools. Feedback from parents and professionals and observations of interactions, clearly demonstrate that young people develop trust and build secure attachments with staff.

Young people gain confidence in their skills because staff do not view disability as a barrier. Excellent levels of communication with parents and other professionals ensure that staff understand individual's potential to achieve. Parents say that their children make progress in their speech and communication, willingness to try new foods, participation in activities, toileting and personal hygiene.

Many of the young people have complex health needs. Their needs are managed well; in a manner that promotes their dignity and privacy. As a result, young people enjoy and make progress during their short breaks because their health needs are met.

Each young person has an educational placement. They attend school every day and staff support them to make the transition between the home and school. They benefit from using communication aids such as sequence strips, to help them understand routines and prepare for the school day. Young people achieve well in school as a result of consistency of approach between the home, family home and education provider. Shared strategies and consistent routines underpin the progress young people make in each environment.

Young people benefit from an excellent level of community engagement. They attend local events, such as fetes and talent contests and they host a fete, which the local community attend. Young people, with staff support, grow their own produce, which they use in the home and sell in the local community. Young people enjoy social experiences with children in the local school and access community equipment and facilities such as the local parks. Other events held in the home, such as Christmas parties, give the opportunity for siblings and families to join in. The variety of experiences gives young people the opportunity to enjoy a range of social interactions. It also helps to promote other people's understanding of disability and challenge assumptions.

Individual targets support young people to become as self-managing as possible. They make excellent progress in skills such as helping to cook, clearing away after meals, unpacking their bags, preparing for school, helping with shopping and managing their personal care. Parents say that their children develop skills, as a result of their short breaks, that promote their independence; preparing them for their transitions and adulthood.

Quality of care

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

Young people receiving short breaks have diverse characteristics and complex needs. The staff work hard to ensure that group dynamics are well balanced so that individuals are placed with peers who complement each other. A professional working with the home reflected that, where group dynamics prove challenging, the staff ensure changes are made. This approach, with young people's happiness and enjoyment as a focus, means that they can develop positive peer relationships. One professional talked of a young person developing a strong friendship, when previously, he had never identified with anyone as a friend.

Many young people in this home do not communicate verbally. Staff ensure that they explore preferred communication methods with parents and other professionals and include this in the care planning. Information in the home, such as the children's guide, complaints process and bullying information is available in symbol format. Young people can use electronic tablet devices and staff use a range of communication aids tailored to individual needs. Care plans take full account of the need to prepare individuals for transitions between the home, school and the family home. Additionally, they consider transitions between activities within the home. Staff are creative in how they manage these transitions. They email the school staff to advise which staff will be on duty in the home during the evening. This means school staff can prepare young people so they know what to expect when they arrive. Other approaches include using an egg timer, to prepare young people for the end of an activity and moving on to another. All approaches are highly individual and support young people to understand how they will be cared for.

Staff ensure that young people make choices and express their preferences, whatever their level of communication or understanding. The care environment is young person-led, with staff considering individual likes and dislikes. Consequently, staff do not make assumptions, they respond to individual's wishes.

Parents and professionals are positive about the care provided for young people during their short breaks. They say: 'It is brilliant, my child enjoys her time in the home, the staff are wonderful with her' and 'it is a home from home'.

The home is very well presented and maintained and there has been considerable improvement in the resources available. A new purpose-built play area with play equipment has been developed. The sensory room has been fully refurbished, with new equipment that provides a range of sensory experiences led by the young people. Individual's health needs are met with the provision of specialist equipment that promotes their comfort and well-being.

There are safe and effective measures in place to record, store and administer medication. However, one health plan did not accurately reflect that previously prescribed medication for a young person has now ceased. This did not negatively impact on the individual as the medication is not sent into the home, and did not

undermine their safety. However, lack of clarity in the health plan has the potential to cause confusion.

Education providers are very positive about the relationship between school and the staff team. They say that staff support young people and families by attending reviews, making valuable contributions to meetings and working with education staff to ensure consistency in strategies and approaches. Staff also attend parent evenings where this is appropriate and communicate regularly with schools. This proactive work supports potentially unsettling transitions for young people between their short breaks and education.

Staff provide a wide range of exciting leisure experiences for young people. There are regular trips to local attractions and places of interest as well as activities such as indoor sky diving and trips to London. Staff also facilitate residential trips, offering a holiday experience. This provides young people with opportunities they may not otherwise access.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Parents and professionals say that young people are kept safe in this home. Comprehensive risk assessments, consistent behaviour management plans and excellent shift planning contributes to ensuring young people's safety is paramount. Staff follow safeguarding protocols and work well as part of multi-agency support groups to promote individual safety plans.

Bullying is not a feature of this home and young people do not go missing. Staff use restraint only as a last resort, to protect individuals from harming themselves or others. Where restraint does occur, staff record it accurately and the manager reviews the incident and carries out a debrief with the staff. Although staff rarely use sanctions, on the occasions they have been used, the recording does not reflect the regulatory requirements. The records do not detail the effectiveness or consequences of any sanctions. This means managers can miss opportunities to determine whether to use alternative sanctions in the future.

Staff are subject to safe recruitment checks prior to appointment and visitors are checked prior to entering the home. This helps prevent unauthorised or unsafe persons having access to young people.

Health and safety checks are in place, promoting a safe physical environment. Each young person has an individual emergency evacuation plan in case of fire. The responsibilities for managing evacuations are clearly defined in comprehensive shift plans. This ensures that staff are aware of the actions they need to take to promote individual's safety in the event of fire. There are clear systems in place for recording and reporting accidents.

Leadership and management

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

A permanent registered manager effectively leads a committed team of staff to provide high quality care for young people. There have been no complaints made about the home and there have been no concerns raised in the time since the last inspection.

The manager has addressed the two requirements and one recommendation from the previous inspection. Regular fire tests are carried out, and remedial action is recorded where staff identify deficiencies in health and safety checks. Staff receive regular supervision and sanctions given to young people are proportionate and appropriate. The manager has a detailed development plan in place, with targets that focus on continual improvement in the quality of service provided.

The statement of purpose clearly sets out the aims and objectives of the home. This provides parents and professionals with clarity on the service offered. However, the current document does not reflect the changes to staffing in the home.

There is regular monitoring of the care provided and the activities in the home. Internal monitoring takes place monthly, with six-monthly summaries that identify improvements and areas for further development. The external monthly monitoring has strengthened in the last two months. Reporting now provides more qualitative narrative that gives a picture of the care provided and considers feedback from parents. This is particularly important, as many young people in this home do not have the ability to express their feelings about the care they receive. Where monitoring identifies shortfalls, the managers take action to address the issues.

The management team support the staff through induction, regular supervision, appraisal and training. They have implemented a process for staff to communicate issues to managers by appointing two of the staff team as representatives. This helps to ensure staff feel listened to while engendering a no-blame culture. Although staff have a good range of training, they identify that the organisation has not responded to requests for training in more specialist areas, such as signing. Staff believe that this is an area they need to be supported in, in order to work more effectively with the young people.

The records kept in the home provide detailed information about the care young people receive and the progress they make. Key work reports track achievements in all areas of development and set out targets. This enables staff to work consistently with young people, supporting them to reach their potential.

There have been no significant incidents since the last inspection. Managers are clear however, on the need to notify Ofsted and other professionals when incidents arise.

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.