

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Louisa Bayley
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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 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**.

Children and young people, with a range of disabilities and complex needs, benefit greatly from the high-quality care provided in this home. The conscientious and caring staff team meet young people's needs through effective, individualised care planning. There is a focus on promoting positive outcomes for all young people. Staff advocate for the young people in their care, ensuring they are able to access their right of opportunity to a wide range of life-enhancing experiences.

Young people and their parents express their happiness and satisfaction with the care offered. Parents say the service is highly valuable to them, offering respite in a safe and secure environment. The relationships between staff and young people are extremely positive. Young people feel nurtured and cared for. Parents say they know their children enjoy their time in the home. One parent talked of the anxiety and distress that is aroused when deciding to use a respite service. They said, 'The staff really help me, because I know that when I leave him he is safe and cared for. That means the world to me.'

The management team understands the strengths and weaknesses of the home. There has been a great deal of improvement since the last inspection, particularly in regard to monitoring young people's progress. Shortfalls identified are in regard to monitoring the quality of care and consultation with other professionals. Areas for improvement are, documenting some aspects of recruitment checks and revising a policy document to make procedures clearer. However, the outcomes for young people and the quality of care they receive have not been compromised in any way.

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
33 (2001)	interview, with their consent and in private, such of the children accommodated there, their parents, relatives and persons working at the home as appears necessary in order to form an opinion of the standard of care provided in the home (Regulation 33 (4)(a))	19/10/2012
34 (2001)	establish and maintain a system for improving the quality of care provided in the children's home, providing for consultation with children accommodated in the home, their parents and placing authorities. (Regulation 34 (1)(b)(3))	19/10/2012

Recommendations

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

- ensure the home has a record of the recruitment and vetting checks which have been carried out on those working (including as volunteers) for the children's home (NMS 16.3)
- ensure the children's home procedure is in line with government guidance and requirements including the duty to refer information to statutory bodies, and that it is known to staff, volunteers and children with specific reference to passing concerns to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO). (NMS 20.2)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people make exceptional progress in developing their emotional resilience, because of the supportive and caring staff team. Parents say their children have overcome the feelings of anxiety and distress they experienced when they started short breaks. As time has progressed, staff have built good attachments with young people, helping them to overcome their anxieties. Staff are creative in helping young people to understand what is happening to them. An example of this is the introduction of a pictorial routine timetable. This provides great comfort to individuals; they are able to understand how long they will be away from home and

the sequence of events and routines. Consequently, young people arrive for their breaks feeling happy and secure in the knowledge they will enjoy themselves.

All young people have exceptionally good attendance at school. Professionals working in the schools say that young people arrive on time, smartly dressed, well looked after and ready to learn. They say that the work the home does to support young people is a key contributor to the individual's progress in school.

The range of activities and opportunities in the home, along with the high aspirations of staff, underpins the individual's exceptional progress in developing their skills. Highly individualised targets are set for each young person. Regular review and monitoring, along with staff creativity in establishing a means of achievement, helps to secure successful outcomes. For example, staff set a target for a young person to shower or bathe. In order to overcome the young person's initial reluctance to shower or bathe staff introduced water play in the garden. They used toys and bath goo to make the experience fun and non-threatening. They were then able to move on to using the toys and goo as part of the bathing routines. This enabled the young person to associate washing and bathing with fun. As a result, the young person achieved their target. Another example of creativity in target setting is around encouraging young people to try different foods. Staff plan recipes and include young people in cooking meals and preparing their own packed lunches. This has given individuals more incentive to try different foods and promoted healthy eating. Other areas of progress for young people include: trying new activities; preparing simple meals independently; independent personal care; developing independent living skills; communicating independently; displaying affection appropriately and participation in residential trips.

Young people have made a positive contribution both to the home and the wider community. They have been involved in fund raising events and fetes during the summer months. Events have been held in community venues and have been attended by young people, their families and members of the public. As a result, a considerable sum of money has been raised. This will benefit young people as the funds raised will contribute to the new sensory garden at the home.

Young people are encouraged and supported to develop skills to become more independent. Staff have high expectations and aspirations for young people. A member of staff said, 'Having a disability does not mean you do not have potential.' A parent reflected that her child is able to dress himself and put his shoes on. She said that it is a relief to know he has the ability to do it. He has developed this skill since he has been visiting for short breaks. Another young person expressed a wish to drive when he is older. Staff accessed the on-line theory driving test for him, which the young person passed. Staff have also arranged for a young person, who is interested in becoming a fire fighter, a visit to the fire station to explore this further. This attitude and approach means that staff consistently support and encourage young people to make progress.

Quality of care

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

Staff in this home ensure that young people feel secure and well looked after. Thoughtful planning by the management team ensures that the group dynamics of young people receiving short breaks is compatible. This helps to reduce anxiety and distress. Some young people, for example, are unable to tolerate noise and react aggressively to it. Staff take this into consideration so that all individuals receiving a short break have a positive experience.

Young people in this home have a wide range of complex needs; many are unable to communicate verbally. The staff use a range of symbols, signs and audio-visual aids to ensure young people are able to express themselves. They have introduced an electronic tablet, which has been extremely popular and has further enhanced the ability of individuals to communicate. The staff have worked in liaison with the schools young people attend, to ensure there is consistency of use. Staff are also receiving training with the schools to further promote their understanding of the functionality. As a result, there is increased scope to gain views on how individuals are feeling and the choices they wish to make.

The children's guide and complaints procedures are written in symbol format for those that require it. Messages, such as the individual's right not to be bullied, are reinforced around the home, in various formats. This helps young people to know how to access support if they need it.

Staff plan individual care comprehensively and effectively. Parents say they are involved in care planning and target setting for their children. Staff have expectations of young people that are based on secure knowledge of their educational potential and understanding of their social, physical, emotional and psychological stages of development. Culture, personal identity and disability are taken into account when care planning. Information on ethnicity, religion and culture is gathered as part of the planning process. Parents say their child's needs are fully considered and the care planned accordingly.

Excellent work with schools places staff in a good position to understand the levels young people should be working at. Staff make visits to the schools to observe young people in their classes and during play times. This helps to promote consistency in the strategies and approaches used with young people. Good liaison between the staff, schools, parents and social workers means that targets for young people are realistic with expectations that encourage improvement and progress. Staff fully recognise that, although the children have disabilities, they have the same issues as other children, such as puberty, adolescence and sexual identity. These aspects are fully considered when care is planned. High-quality reporting on key work sessions, targets and achievement helps to provide a really good understanding of how young people have progressed.

Young people benefit from a wide range of experiences, such as residential trips, day trips to the beach, forest and parks, bowling, skating, swimming, soft play and museums. All trips are planned well in advance with detailed risk assessments in

place. Following each trip, staff complete an evaluation which helps to identify the benefits for each young person and lessons to be learned for the future. Reviewing trips in this way helps to maximise the potential for enjoyment and learning, both at that point and in the future.

The home provides a safe and spacious environment for young people. The home is clean and well maintained with good quality resources. Appropriately trained staff meet individual health needs, with a safe and effective process for administering and monitoring medication. Staff knowledge is further enhanced through work with external professionals. For example, a nutritionist met with the staff to look at how young people could be supported to improve their diet. Following the meeting and discussion, the nutritionist compiled a list of recommendations. Consequently, staff have made improvements to the food prepared.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people benefit from comprehensive risk assessments, which take account of triggers and likely responses to situations and the environment. Staffing levels ensure that young people are safeguarded, while enabled to participate in a wide range of activities and experiences. Good practice such as using passwords when a child is collected, contribute to keeping young people safe. Young people and their parents say young people feel safe in the home. This is evident in their behaviour. One parent gave an example of her son screaming and becoming aggressive when he first came to the home. This has now completely changed and he is able to come into the home with no anxiety, looking forward to his stay. This indicates how well he has settled and how safe he feels.

Restraint is used rarely, and only as a last resort, in order to protect young people from injury. When an incident of restraint does occur, it is documented according to the organisational procedures and legislative requirements. The manager reviews these incidents and debriefs the staff involved. This helps to identify triggers for behaviour and actions that may be taken to prevent further occurrences. Positive behaviour is promoted through individualised, targeted work. Staff clearly demonstrate their understanding of behavioural issues and the fact that young people respond well to consistent approaches and firm boundaries. Key work sessions and monthly progress reports document achievement. Reports are shared with parents and external professionals, which helps to reinforce and celebrate positive outcomes.

There are no incidents of young people going missing from this home. The management team have a signed and agreed protocol in place with the local police. This will help to ensure that there is a robust response and procedures are followed in the event any young person does go missing.

Staff and volunteers working in the home are subject to vetting and checks. The organisational policy clearly sets out the recruitment procedures, which include safe

care interviews. All staff and volunteers have enhanced Criminal Records Bureau checks. Staff details are held, however, records for volunteers do not include details of the checks made, such as references. Identity checks are carried out as part of the vetting and recruitment process. However, checklists held in the home do not all include details of the documentation used to verify identity. The safety of young people is not compromised, as these checks are made prior to adults working or volunteering in the home. However, lack of documentary evidence in the form of completed checklists means the home does not hold the full information required.

The home has a policy detailing child protection and safeguarding procedures. However, the policy does not detail events that require referral to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO). As a result, there is no clear organisational guidance about when referrals should be made. This has not impacted on the safety of young people.

Leadership and management

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

A permanent, experienced Registered Manager has responsibility for the management of the home. She leads a committed staff team that is passionate about providing high-quality care for young people.

There have been notable improvements since the last inspection. These have focused on monitoring and evaluating progress for young people. The quality of recording, planning and reviewing plans and targets for young people has significantly improved. As a result, individual achievements are well documented, providing a helpful picture of young people's lives. There have been no complaints since the last inspection.

One requirement was raised at the last inspection; to establish monitoring and evaluation which provided for consultation with children, their parents and placing authorities. This has been partially met. Consultation with parents has been implemented and is meaningful. The management team has made home visits to parents to meet with them and gain their views of the care. They have focused on gathering parents' concerns around transitions for young people, from children's services to adult services. They have responded to concerns raised by hosting an information evening in the home, which has been attended by parents. As a result, a mentoring service for young people with disabilities is being initiated. Consultation with placing authorities has not taken place. This is reflected in the feedback from social workers, who say they are not asked for their views on how the quality of care could be improved. Monitoring of the quality of care does not provide an effective evaluation of the progress the home has made, or areas to be developed further.

Independent monitoring takes place on a monthly basis. Although the visits are thorough, they do not include consultation with parents. As many young people using the service have communication difficulties, feedback from parents to gain an objective view is an important part of monitoring.

The Statement of Purpose is clear and comprehensive. It has been recently updated and submitted to Ofsted, to reflect changes to the staff team. As a result, placing authorities, parents and staff are provided with a detailed understanding of the aims, services and facilities provided by the home.

The home is well maintained and decorated and is safe and secure for young people, taking into account their needs. Health and safety requirements such as fire procedures, drills and checks are all up to date. Portable appliance testing and electrical testing is up to date. All young people have personal emergency evacuation plans and staff are allocated to support individuals in case of fire, as part of the shift planning. This means young people's safety is promoted.

Staff have high-quality, up-to-date training. They say they feel supported in their roles through training and supervision and within shift teams. They also say they have benefited from improvements to the structure of team meetings. The meetings are more young person focused. Thought given ahead of time to collating staff views, ensures all staff can contribute to care planning for each individual. This actively and equitably enables staff to participate fully. As a result, young people benefit from the diverse range of skills and experiences staff have to offer. This helps staff support young people to achieve the best possible outcomes.

Staff working in the home have very positive relationships with other agencies, such as schools and social workers. Cohesive partnership working is a key feature of the home. It helps to promote consistency in working with young people, improves communication and develops staff understanding of the potential of individuals. As a result, staff are able to set realistic but aspirational targets for young people.

Significant events are notified to the appropriate parties, with full and detailed information which assures that procedures have been followed to promote young people's safety.

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.