

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Louisa Bayley
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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 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.

Overall effectiveness

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

This home provides highly individualised and well-planned care for children with a wide range of complex needs. A parent said, 'The home is brilliant. I do not know how I would cope without them.' Staff recognise the anxieties and concerns of parents using the service and take this into account when planning short breaks. The management team ensure that introduction to the service is inclusive of siblings and that consideration is given to the needs of the whole family. Consequently, the admissions process is tailored to each family, and proceeds at a pace they are comfortable with. This means that children feel settled and secure when they have their first overnight stay.

Staff have detailed knowledge of the needs of each individual. This is supported by excellent communication systems within the home which promote the sharing of information. Examples of this are: a record for each child of approaches that work and those that do not, and care plan summaries that are used to refresh staff at the beginning of each shift. As a result young people receive consistent and high quality care that is specific to their needs, wishes and preferences. One parent commented, 'The staff are amazing. They show true dedication to the children and care for them as a parent would do and want.'

The promotion of equality and diversity is a key strength of the home. Great importance is placed on gaining children's views and encouraging them to make informed choices. Staff use a variety of communication methods to ensure that children can express themselves and be understood. Additionally, staff work hard to ensure young people with disabilities and complex needs are able to overcome barriers to accessing a wide range of opportunities and experiences.

Two shortfalls were identified: recording of remedial action taken to resolve issues with fire equipment and slight gaps in restraint training for some staff. These shortfalls have not had a negative impact on outcomes for young people nor have they compromised their safety.

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
29 (2001)	ensure that the records of every fire drill or fire alarm test conducted include details of any deficiency in either the procedure or the equipment concerned, together with details of the steps taken to remedy that deficiency. (Regulation 29.1 Schedule 4.6)	10/02/2012

Recommendations

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

- ensure that 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, with specific regard to ensuring restraint refresher training is up to date for all staff. (NMS 18.1)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Outcomes for children in this home are excellent. Disabled children are supported to access a wide range of pursuits and activities. Staff promote the right to equality of opportunity, ensuring that children enjoy social experiences and developmental activities. Children receiving the service have 100% attendance at school. The home is extremely proactive in engaging with schools to share successful approaches. Key workers visit the young people at school, observe their behaviour and interactions and work with school staff to develop targets that can be implemented in the home. A social worker said of one young person, 'the home has worked very well with him. There were significant behavioural issues but since the home has worked with the school to agree strategies, there has been no repeat of the behaviour.' Key workers and staff from the home attend statutory reviews and meetings so that they can fully contribute to the care and education planning process. This helps to build comprehensive knowledge of individual needs and strengths so that children can be supported to reach their full potential.

Staff plan a varied and stimulating range of trips and activities for young people, regardless of their disabilities. An extremely thorough plan precedes trips and thought and consideration are given to how each individual will benefit. This results

in goals, targets and realistic expectations so that children develop socially and educationally as well as having fun. Staff seek feedback from participants on trips, both adults and children, so that improvements can be made for future outings. Staff have made a short film of the children and young people participating in activities such as: archery, cooking, go-karting, beach trips, parties, face painting, fancy dress and bowling. The film proficiently illustrates children's involvement, contribution, enjoyment and social interaction.

Young people are encouraged to develop their independence skills appropriate to their levels of development and understanding. Staff support activities such as cooking, shopping and paying for goods. This helps to prepare young people to become more self managing.

Parents say that they have good relationships with staff in the home. They feel able to phone at any time to see how their child is. Equally, parents feel assured that staff will contact them if they need to pass information over. Parents and siblings are welcomed when they drop-off and pick-up their child. The home facilitates contact if the need arises, offering a safe and neutral environment. This is a comfort to primary carers and positive for children. Christmas parties and events at the home are inclusive of parents and siblings, which further promotes positive relationships.

Quality of care

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

Young people in this home benefit from warm, positive relationships with staff. The home communicates very well with parents and with schools to develop successful strategies which support high quality delivery of care. One parent said, in reference to their son, 'I have been very impressed with his key worker, how he deals with him and gets the best out of him.' The home gives careful consideration to the dynamics of the group of children receiving a short break at any given time. This ensures that positive relationships between the young people are promoted so that they get the best out of their stay.

Each young person has a detailed, individual care plan with characteristics such as disability, gender, culture and religion all taken into consideration. Robust information is gathered as part of the assessment process prior to admission and this is used to inform the delivery of care. Staffing ratios are at a level appropriate to the individual's needs and information is shared with all staff regarding the developmental level and ability of each child. Consequently, realistic goals are set and children are encouraged to be as self managing as possible. A parent said of the home, 'they work hard to help my child develop and grow.'

The home ensures that the complaints procedure is well publicised and that young people and parents know how to make a complaint. The children and young people's guide for the home contains information on complaints. This is available in a standard version, symbols and also as a talking book. Parents say that they are confident that if they had a complaint, the staff would take it seriously.

Children in the home have a range of communication difficulties and some have limited or no verbal interaction. Staff ensure that this does not impede their ability to express themselves, their views and their wishes. Staff regularly seek and record feedback from young people. This is shared with the team and used in planning future care, events and activities. An example of this has been young people saying they would like to have a pet at the home. As a result of the request, there is now a resident rabbit and a guinea pig.

The home provides a healthy environment which is able to facilitate the needs of each young person. Bedrooms are spacious and have en-suite bathrooms which can be screened off. This enables staff to give adequate supervision while promoting individual's dignity and privacy. The refurbished kitchen is very well appointed, with a new cooker and hob which have safety features to prevent the risk of accidents. This is particularly beneficial when young people are learning to cook. The living spaces in the home are clean, bright and welcoming with comfortable furniture. Children have access to a wide range of toys, games and books. There is a large outside space which is well designed and features suitable play equipment. Consequently, children benefit from being meaningfully engaged in stimulating play and activities, led by their choices and preferences.

There are photographs of children enjoying activities on their short breaks and the walls are personalised with children's hand prints. Information is displayed in pictorial, symbol and written formats. This helps children to see which staff members are on duty, what menu choices are available and which other children are staying.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Children in this home are safe because staff are suitably vetted and trained. Visitors to the home are asked to sign in and out and identification is checked. This ensures that contact with adults is safely managed. Furthermore, physical safety is promoted through the well-maintained environment and specialist equipment. Staff are trained in child protection and safeguarding which means they are able to respond to concerns if they are raised. Staff are also trained in first aid and respond promptly to medical needs and emergencies. As a result, parents are able to trust that their child is well looked after and that children receive the intervention they need.

Staff ensure that behaviour management strategies are consistent with those used at school and by parents at home. Incentives and rewards are used with children and praise is a key feature of the day-to-day care, reinforcing achievements. Where restraint is used, it is in strict accordance with the legislative framework and is recorded appropriately. Staff receive training in an accredited physical intervention programme. Clear, detailed risk assessments are in place for each young person, in order to take account of young people's vulnerability. This supports staff to balance risk against enabling young people to grow and develop in their skills, confidence

and understanding.

There is a robust response to bullying in the home. The staff recognise that some children have difficulty in understanding or expressing that they feel bullied. This is mitigated by high levels of vigilance, appropriate staffing ratios and prompt responses to situations that arise between young people. An example of this vigilance has been where staff have changed the dynamics of a group of children staying at the same time. This enabled a young person to benefit from more positive relationships, within a peer group in which he felt more comfortable. Children are given information on bullying in a variety of formats, such as talking books, symbols and pictures. Interactions with other children are recorded in daily detailed records and enable staff to look at any patterns of behaviour that are indicative of bullying.

Safety checks are made in line with regulatory requirements and fire evacuation drills have been held at appropriate frequencies. All young people have a personal evacuation plan.

Leadership and management

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

The management team use a wide range of monitoring and evaluation in order to continuously improve the quality of care. Views are sought from parents, children and social workers and incorporated into the running of the home. Regulation 33 visits are made monthly and followed by thorough and timely reports. Issues and concerns highlighted in the reports are responded to promptly. There is a comprehensive development plan giving clear targets and time scales with an emphasis on promoting positive outcomes for children. A member of staff said, 'Management are quite challenging of the staff to ensure that the service keeps progressing and evolving.' The result of this is a home which sets high expectations in order to provide high quality care for children. Regular team meetings are held and comprehensive minutes recorded. Staff are able to contribute to the agenda and issues and concerns are addressed. Staff say that the communication of information is excellent. This helps to provide a consistent service and develop a shared vision for the development of the home.

The recommendation from the previous inspection regarding updating the insurance certificate with the name and address of the home has been met.

The Statement of Purpose clearly sets out the aims and objectives of the home. Agreement is in place between the provider and the placing authority regarding the criteria for admission. Parents are appraised of the frequency and duration of short breaks as part of the admissions process. The management demonstrate flexibility in the number and duration of visits that are planned prior to admission for overnight stays. This enables families and children to feel fully prepared, promoting a sense of security and trust.

New staff receive the Children's Workforce Development Council induction. The home

also has its own induction material and this combination ensures that staff are well resourced to undertake their roles. There is a programme of training and development for all staff, with good access to more specialised training, pertinent to supporting the needs of the young people. However, there are some gaps in refresher training in restraint for some of the staff team. Staff receive regular supervision, which they say is supportive and gives an opportunity to look at all areas of practice.

Staffing ratios are planned in accordance with the individual care requirements of children receiving a short break. Consideration is also given to staff rotas and shifts in order to align key workers with children they have responsibility for.

Records are clearly detailed and securely stored, in accordance with data protection requirements. However, the records pertaining to fire equipment testing do not currently detail the action that the home has taken to report faults. This does not compromise safety as appropriate action is taken. Significant events in the home are responded to appropriately and are notified to all relevant parties. Parents say that they receive detailed feedback from the home regarding all aspects of their child's care, including accidents, restraints, medication, activities, interactions and behaviour.

Equality and diversity practice is **outstanding**.