

Inspection report for Children's Home

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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.

This was an unannounced full inspection in which all key standards were assessed. The home provides an outstanding service in all areas to children who require a high level of care and support. The main strength of this service is the highly experienced and competent staff team which understands the complex needs of children well. Children are supported to live healthy lifestyles during their stay. Dignity and personal space is respected. Children are helped to make informed choices in all aspects of their care. There are very strong links between parents, social workers and schools. This means that children greatly benefit from staff who are fully aware of their needs and plans. A particularly strong area of this service is the effective quality assurance and monitoring systems. This means that the service is continually adapting to meet the changing needs of children. Parents expressed praise for the dedication and commitment of the staff who care for their children. This is an exceptional provision that is a beacon of outstanding practice within the sector.

Improvements since the last inspection

There were no actions or recommendations made at the last inspection.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Children's health needs are met through a high level of care from experienced and well trained staff. Meals provide a balance of healthy nutritional options which are regularly discussed during team meetings. Menus are planned with care and awareness of children's likes, dislikes and dietary requirements. Culturally diverse meals are incorporated into planning of meals with consideration to children's backgrounds and experiences. Staff ensure that children know what food is being served by positive interaction using a range of communication methods. This works well as children respond very positively to staff. A parent wrote 'staff are excellent at promoting healthy living with the children'.

Children experience a healthy environment and their health needs are met. Health care plans include emergency contact details of each child's General Practitioner (GP). Children are constantly monitored to ensure they are fit and well. Parents believe this is a strong aspect of the service as they are regularly consulted about their child's welfare. Medication administration is managed safely and with care reflecting the organisation's robust policy. Records are regularly monitored. Staff receive relevant specialist training in administering medication. A young person indicated on a survey that children are looked after by staff if they are unwell. Children are therefore provided with a high standard of care that meets their individual needs.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Children are kept safe through policies and procedures that are robust and understood, the high competence of staff and the consistent monitoring of the health and safety of all who use the premises.

Children stay in accommodation where personal space is respected. Staff understand the necessity to treat each child with respect and dignity. A member of staff wrote 'we have an ethos of treating all our guests with respect and in a dignified and humanitarian way'. A child indicated on a survey that 'the care the staff give me is great.' Sensitive information is suitably stored to ensure confidentiality. Personal care is therefore exceptionally well provided.

Complaints are dealt with promptly and without delay. Children and parents are informed about the complaints procedures. Information for children is presented in a way that helps understanding. The welfare and safety of children is protected through staff awareness, training and supervision. Children are protected from bullying. The matching process of arranging respite care is thoughtfully undertaken to ensure children are able to stay together without conflict. The high staffing ratios also provide a level of protection if children are agitated by other guests. Bullying is challenged by staff and discussed openly with parents and children. This provides a

supportive culture within the home in which bullying is not accepted.

Children who are missing are reported to appropriate agencies in line with written guidance. Therefore children are protected if and when they are missing from the home.

Relationships between staff and young people are friendly, caring and consistent. Children respond to this positively. Behaviour management is sensitive to the needs of children. Safe and appropriate boundaries and well organised planning during their respite visit ensures children are cared for very well. Parents are fully involved with any concerns about their child's behaviour. A parent wrote 'staff always ensure we are informed about our child's behaviour, diet and activities during his stay and request our participation in decisions regarding the house'.

The health and safety of children, staff and visitors is promoted through robust and effective checks and procedures. Fire checks are carried out in accordance with the organisation's policy and national minimum standards. Maintenance checks on electrical installations, gas boilers and portable electrical appliances are completed within suitable timescales. Therefore children are cared for in a safe and secure environment.

Children are cared for by staff who are suitably vetted, trained and assessed as being competent in working in a respite service. Visitors to the home are asked to sign in and out and identification checked. This ensures that contact with adults is managed safely.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Children receive individual support that promotes their well-being during their respite stay. For example, each child is assessed to ensure they receive the right level of care before they are provided with a service. Keyworkers liaise closely with parents on all aspects of care. Parents were positive about how the staff communicate with them. Education of children is actively promoted. Contact between the local schools and the home establishes a strong link ensuring children experience a 24 hour curriculum. This has many benefits. Communication systems are implemented for children which all parties can help to develop. Educational targets can be further supported during respite care. A parent wrote that the home 'gives children opportunities and broaden their horizons'.

Recreational activities are a particular strong aspect of this service. Staff encourage and promote children to access a wide range of activities. For example, attending a local youth club, swimming pools and theme parks. This provides children with the opportunity to integrate with the local community and promotes social inclusion.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Children receive a high level of care from staff who know and understand them. Care plans include information that helps staff to safely care for children. For example, daily routines established at home are included in plans to provide a continuity of care during the respite period. Individual needs with regards to gender, disability and culture are identified and acted upon. This ensures that each child's presenting needs are carefully considered and understood. Children's needs and development are reviewed regularly. Annual reviews take place within timescales and provide an opportunity for parents, teachers, social workers and care staff to discuss further ways to support children using the service. Children are consulted and, depending upon their level of understanding, play an active role in their review. A child wrote 'I can make my own decisions'.

Children benefit by keeping in contact with family members during their respite visit. Parents were very positive about this aspect of the service. Children are able to speak to their family and parents can visit whenever they wish. Staff work closely with parents and provide regular updates on the development of the children.

Children are exceptionally supported to make decisions about their care using a wide range of communication systems. Staff are experienced and skilled in caring for children with complex learning and communication difficulties. Photographs of staff who are on duty help children when they first arrive to know who will be looking after them. Visual timetables provide children with a plan of activities to enable them to understand what is going to happen during their stay. This works well. A touch screen interactive computer supports children to communicate their needs while developing skills in information technology. For example, the software is designed to meet the individual communication abilities of each child. As the child becomes more proficient in using the computer the programme helps them develop further skills in such areas as hand eye coordination, object recognition and making informed choices. Staff, parents and children were all very positive about this innovative use of technology.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

Children receive care which helps to prepare them for and support them into adulthood. Working closely with parents and social workers, staff contribute to enabling children who are approaching transition into adult support services. Children are assessed as to their level of independence and helped during their stay. For example, some children are able to make their own beds, go shopping and help prepare meals. A child wrote 'I get help to be independent'.

The accommodation is of a very high standard. It is kept clean and tidy and meets the needs of young people well. The home is spacious and includes a sensory room

which young people particularly enjoy. Maintenance is up to date. A cleaning programme is managed well. Decorated in neutral colours, to help children with visual impairments, the interior of the home provides a welcoming atmosphere which children respond positively too.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

Children significantly benefit from the strength of the highly competent, well trained and experienced staff. The leadership and management of this setting provides a safe and stimulating environment for children to experience.

Children are provided with information that helps them understand what the service is set up to do. For example, the introduction of a talking book that gives children an opportunity to know what the home can do for them. A Statement of Purpose reflects the function and ethos of the home and meets the necessary legal requirements. The statement is updated annually and is available to social workers and parents.

Children receive the care they need from a staff group who understand them well. There are sufficient numbers of staff on duty to meet the needs of the children. Staff are proactive and enthusiastic. This provides an atmosphere of encouragement for children to experience. Staff receive regular formal supervision and annual appraisal. Staff confirm that they feel very well supported from a management team that is responsive and helpful. Training is ongoing and includes both mandatory and specialist courses. All established staff are qualified to National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) at level 3.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. There is a strong culture within this setting which promotes children with disabilities to actively engage with the outside world. Using a social model of disability the staff encourage children to meet their potential in all aspects of their lives. The development of communication systems that children understand and progress with is just one important aspect of this. Children have choices about their care with regards to such areas as meals they like or activities they enjoy. Staff are sensitive to the individual needs of young people. For example, by always making sure a female care worker provides personal care to a female child. Children are provided with a service that is sensitive to their needs and reflects positively in supporting them during their stay.

The administration of the home is efficient and the home is financially sound. Monitoring of records and practice is a consistent theme that clearly improves and positively develops the service. Quality assurance systems are very well established with parents represented in local forums. Monthly manager's reports to the organisation on all aspects of the home provide a comprehensive evaluation of the service. Visits from a senior member of the organisation to check on how the service is operating further strengthen this approach. Therefore children stay in a well run and safely managed respite service.

Children's needs, development and progress are recorded to reflect their individuality. A parent wrote 'the service continues to improve fulfilling my child's needs and interests. I am very happy with the service'.