

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Sharon Lewis
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This children's home is privately owned. It is registered with Ofsted to accommodate up to eight children. It offers long-term care, as well as respite care for children and young people with a learning disability.

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 receive very good individualised support, which is rooted in effective care planning. Children's lives are enhanced by the strong promotion of their independence and choice. They have extensive opportunities to build on their life skills and enjoy a wide range of activities. There is very good continuity of care, which enables children to flourish. Children have an amiable, mutually respectful relationship with staff and see them as positive role models. This is complemented by good partnership working with placing authorities and schools. Children feel safe and respond well to the secure, empowering, nurturing environment. They are making significant improvements in relation to their starting points.

Children benefit from effective leadership and management and robust quality assurance. The home is being continually adapted to meet their evolving needs. This includes refurbishing the property and updating practices, policies and procedures to reflect the new standards and regulations. There is a sharp focus on outcomes for children. Children benefit from a stable, experienced, competent and passionate staff team. Staff demonstrate a positive commitment to celebrating the uniqueness of each child and meeting their diverse needs. Recommendations have been made to further improve the strong safeguarding arrangements and staff appraisals.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- promote the safety and welfare of children, with specific reference to visitors (NMS 4.1)
- take into account children's views in the staff performance appraisals process. (19.6)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Children are described as 'happy' and 'relaxed'. They benefit from good outcomes which positively enhances all aspects of their well-being. Children thrive within an empowering atmosphere which proactively promotes their rights, autonomy and choices. Children respond well to the home's high expectations, which build on their strengths and encourage them to achieve. The consistent encouragement succeeds in building up their self-esteem and confidence. Children have valued, significant attachments to staff and the home. This provides them with stability and strengthens their emotional resilience. Professionals comment that children have 'improved'. They are actively working on their personal goals with their key worker.

Children are successfully learning practical and personal skills necessary for adulthood. They are able to present themselves in a socially acceptable manner. This includes controlling their moods and anti-social behaviour. Children understand the importance of boundaries and show affection appropriately. Children demonstrate greater maturity and are achieving educationally. This is recognised by their schools and other organisations through the awarding of achievement certificates. Children have individualised independent living skills targets, which are related to their respective abilities. Children assist with household chores, such as making their bed, vacuuming, polishing and loading the washing machine. Children assist with the home's weekly grocery shopping and they also make themselves drinks and snacks.

Children greatly enjoy living at the home. They participate in a wide range of fulfilling group and individual activities. Internal activities include movie nights, pampering and listening to music. Children enjoy spending time in their local community and exploring places further afield. Examples are going to the seaside, the theatre, cinema, parks, shopping centres and other places of interest. Children learn to take pride in their own and each other's heritage. Children follow their cultural and religious beliefs and celebrate a wide range of festivals and significant events. Children appreciate the fact that their opinions are respected. Children contribute to decision making, influencing the home's refurbishment, activity and menu planning. Individually they choose their own clothing and how they wish to spend their leisure time.

Quality of care

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

Professionals highlight that the home provides 'very individualised care' and that staff are 'very attentive'. They feel staff are especially skilled in their interpretation of non-verbal communication. Staff communicate well with the children, using a range of methods. These include pictorial communication systems and objects of reference. There are plans to introduce a total communicating system to further enhance children's lives. Staff enjoy 'making a difference,' stating they are 'passionate' about their work. Staff demonstrate a strong understanding of children's needs. Care planning comprehensively addresses the uniqueness of each young person. Plans concisely detail the young person's culture, religious needs, sexuality, personal identity and interests. Staff celebrate children's differences and actively promote their dignity, rights and independent advocacy services.

Staff work significantly well with placing authorities and schools. They demonstrate a strong commitment to having a 'partnership of care'. This includes sharing children's goals so they are all working together to achieve the same outcome. An example of this is the setting of the same targets and working towards identical semi-independent skills. Staff proactively promote children's education, transporting them to school, spending time with them within school and providing escorts on school trips. Staff help children with their homework. They also read to children and undertake educational puzzles with them. Staff actively advocate for children's educational needs. For instance, staff requested that a young person changes groups so they can be more intellectually challenged. The management carefully considers all new referrals, to ensure they do not have a detrimental impact on the other children.

Children have access to the services and support they need, which results in good health outcomes. Staff effectively care for children with a range of health conditions. Children receive extensive support regarding their emotional and physical health. This results in significant improvements in their sleeping patterns and a deduction in their medication. Staff promote a healthy lifestyle through diet and exercise. This also positively impacts on children's health, resulting in them no longer needing to attend hospital appointments for specific issues. Staff receive appropriate health-related training. This includes paediatric first aid and medication administration. Staff provide nutritious and culturally diverse meals, which take account of their religious traditions. For example they cook halal meat dishes and use separate utensils for these.

Children live in a clean, comfortable home which is continually being refurbished. They benefit from new carpets, sofas, dining equipment and the redecoration of communal areas and their bedrooms. The entrance area is warm and inviting, having a picture of the word 'welcome' in an extensive number of languages. Photos of the children enjoying a wide range of activities are also on display in this area and throughout the home. Children have their own bedrooms which they are able to personalise to reflect their interests and needs. An example being padded walls around their bed to prevent self-injury.

The premises offer children a range of communal spaces. They mainly enjoy spending time in the television lounge. They can also spend their leisure time in the dining room, where they can also use the computer. They are able to relax and be suitably stimulated in the new sensory room. A vibrantly decorated contact room is available for them to spend time with their friends and relatives. Outdoors they can have fun on the adventure play equipment and the bouncy castle. There are also plans to develop a sensory garden. Management hope this will further enhance children's experience of being outdoors.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Children benefit from strong safeguarding arrangements which actively promote their safety and welfare. Professionals praise the home's ability to make children feel 'secure'. Staff work well with children who have experience of abuse and neglect. They effectively help children to flourish within a stable, caring environment. Staff nurture children, helping them feel secure, and develop trustful attachments. All staff receive regular safeguarding training. The organisation has established links with the Local Safeguarding Children Board. The home's safeguarding procedure has been updated to include the new terminology and regulatory guidance.

Staff appropriately promote positive behaviour. They use an extensive range of methods, which includes role modelling, encouragement, firm boundaries and constructive responses. Children rarely display challenging needs and staff do not have to issue sanctions or use restraints. The strong partnership working results in consistent practice as both the home and the school use the same behavioural management methods. Staff feel they are 'making a difference'. They explain that children's 'behaviour has changed'. Professionals confirm the positive impact the home has made to children's lives and the significant improvements.

Children enjoy living at the home and are not absent without authority. They do, however, require close supervision outdoors. Risk assessments appropriately highlight issues and hazardous behaviours. Consent documentation effectively manages the home's rules and practices. Children have access to pictorial complaints information, which is on display within the home. The complaints procedure also provides details of children's rights organisations and Ofsted. There are no issues with bullying. Children relate well with each other and have managed to form meaningful friendships. An example is looking forward to respite users and engaging in fun activities, as if they were having a 'sleepover'.

Children live in a home which is physically safe and secure. Staff understand the importance of safe care practices. The home has certificates which verify the safety of the gas, electrical and fire safety equipment. Children participate in fire drills and understand the need to promptly evacuate the building. Children receive protection from the organisation's recruitment system. The home does not employ new staff, unless all the necessary checks have been received. This helps prevent unsuitable

persons from working in the home. Staff understand their duty of care and the need to appropriately protect children. They respond well to incidents. Staff are doing all they can to safeguard children, facilitate contact and 'chaperone' visitors. The home, however, must be mindful to ensure external arrangements do not have a detrimental impact on the safety and welfare of children.

Leadership and management

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

Children live in a home which has strong, enthusiastic and effective leadership and management. The home has complied with the requirements from the last inspection. The home had to ensure staff are suitably qualified. Staff vocational training is progressing well. This ensures that staff are trained and competent to meet children's needs. The home had to ensure they were fully meeting Regulation 34. Children benefit from robust quality assurance arrangements. There is stringent monitoring of records detailed in Schedule 6 and reports are sent as required to Ofsted. This complements the established Regulation 33 monthly monitoring visits.

The home has a clear Statement of Purpose, which outlines the home's aims and objectives. Children have a guide, which outlines what they can expect from the service. The home has not had any complaints and they continue to receive compliments from parents and placing authorities. An example is a thank you card from a parent thanking staff for helping their child's development. The home provides a comprehensive service to children which positively promotes their ethnicity origin, culture, age, disability, gender, sexual orientation and ability. Staff celebrate the uniqueness of each child and wish to empower them with the skills needed for adult life.

Children benefit from the appointment of a permanent manager, who has extensive experience in the disabilities field. The new manager is currently going through the registration process. The manager has introduced a wide range of changes which has substantially improved the quality of care. There is an awareness of the home's strengths and the areas requiring further development. Management have a comprehensive vision to drive forward. There is a good understanding and implementation of the new regulations and national minimum standards. Policies and procedures have been updated to reflect the new framework and guidance.

Children receive assistance from an experienced, stable, committed staff team. Staff believe in empowering children and demonstrate a passion for their work. They describe their work as 'rewarding'. The organisation provides a wide range of training and support which effectively helps staff support to fulfil their role. Staff benefit from regular individual supervision, team meetings and appraisals. The latter has been recently completed for staff. The only shortfall relates to taking into account children's views. This is a new element contained within the new standards. The manager is currently examining how they can creatively include children's views into the performance appraisal process.

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.