

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 nine 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 reside within a home which is continually evolving to meet their needs. The service demonstrates a strong commitment to enhancing children's lives. Children's rights are at the heart of the service. This includes, where necessary, involving advocates to promote the best interests of children. Children make consistently good progress, particularly in relation to their starting points. Children confidently communicate their needs, manage their emotions, learn socially appropriate behaviour and independent living skills. There is a culture of celebrating the uniqueness of each child and assisting them with developing a positive identity.

Children are happy and comfortable in their surroundings. They enjoy engaging in a wide range of community activities, on par with their peers. The home receives positive feedback from placing authorities and parents. Care planning and practice are person centred and effectively highlight individual needs. There is a strong promotion of a wide range of communication aids. This informs children's understanding and enables them to effectively communicate their needs.

The service understands the importance of safeguarding children. There is a good understanding of safe working practice, which is complemented by comprehensive risk assessments and behaviour management plans. Children receive care from an experienced staff team who are continually trained to provide a quality service. High staffing levels meet children's individual and collective needs. Children benefit from passionate leadership and the desire to develop an outstanding service. One recommendation is being made to further improve business continuity. The recommendation relates to formally recording the plans to develop the service.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- produce a written development plan. (NMS 15.2)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Children lead valued fulfilling lives and benefit from consistently good outcomes. They are progressing in all areas of their lives. This is particularly significant compared to their initial starting points. Children confidently use a range of communication methods to express their needs and preferences. Children are growing in self-confidence, they demonstrate a greater sense of independence and maturity. This positively impacts on their well-being and they are now expressing more of their true personality. Staff describe children as being 'full of life' and 'like a completely different person'. There is a marked decrease in their socially unacceptable behaviour and a reduction in their anxiety. Parents and professionals positively comment on the 'big improvement' and state they are 'very impressed' with children's progress.

Children have a positive self-view taking pride in their gender, cultural and national identity. They learn to appreciate the religious and cultural traditions of others, through meals and cultural evenings. This enhances their awareness in relation to diverse communities. Children observe their religious traditions and also enjoy attending places of worship. Children enjoy celebrating their birthdays and creating treasured memories. This contributes to valued life story work, enabling children to reflect on their achievements and life at the home. Children work with staff on their family tree and they also benefit from training in gender identity.

Children engage in extensive activities on par with their peers. Staff state that children now have 'expanded horizons'. Internal and external activities provide stimulating opportunities for their personal development and fulfilment. Within the home children particularly enjoy messy play and using the home's ipad. They enjoy their local amenities, which includes leisure and recreational facilities. They regularly eat out, go shopping, bowling and to the cinema. They also venture out into the wider community visiting parks, farms, museums, zoos and places of interest throughout London and Essex. Children help to devise their activity programmes which ensures the home effectively caters for their needs and interests.

Children have 100% school attendance and are achieving educationally. Children complete their GCSEs and are studying for specialists awards. There is both internal and external recognition of children's achievements. Children obtain specific certificates from the home, their respective schools and local authorities. Children benefit from the strong partnership working between the home and their educational establishments. This contributes to their good outcomes and continuity of care, that helps them maximise their potential.

Children actively influence the running of the home. They express their choices during their daily interactions, key work sessions and within house meetings. This enables them to share their views and assist with the home's plans relating to activities, menus, redecoration and house developments. The close monitoring of contact arrangements ensures that they promote the best interests of children. Children are able to meet with relatives within the home, in the designated contact room. Children can have meals with their relatives within the home. They can also enjoy external activities with relatives and appropriate staff support.

Children are learning a wide range of independence skills, to actively prepare them for adult life. They all have personalised life skills targets which focus on practical skills and personal development. They learn to take responsibility for themselves through feeding themselves, attending to their personal care and managing their continence. They assist in the daily household routines cleaning, going grocery shopping, cooking and making drinks. They positively contribute to life at the home by laying and clearing the table, washing up, unpacking groceries and gardening. Children learn aspects of money management, through having saving accounts and paying for items when out shopping. They make a positive contribution to the wider community through their involvement in a specialist club. Their recycling efforts contributes to the environment and to their personal development.

Quality of care

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

Children benefit from a service which enriches their lives. The philosophy of care ensures staff have high aspirations for children empowering them to reach their full potential. There is a good promotion of children's rights which includes involving advocates and advocating on behalf of children. An example of the latter is their success in obtaining a place in a good school. Social workers and parents state they are 'very happy' with the quality of care. Parents highlight they feel 'confident' in the home's ability to meet their child's needs. They also state they are 'very, very grateful'.

Children have positive attachments with staff. They benefit from a key work system and dedicated hours of quality time, where they undertake activities together which contributes to children knowing they are 'valued and loved'. Children state that their 'key workers are cool'. Children know how to complain and use this system to voice their concerns. This also includes contacting Ofsted. The service works in partnership with parents. Social workers comment on the home's 'good relationship' with

parents. Staff assist with helping parents' accept their child's disability and increasing their awareness of their needs.

Children self-define themselves through the person centred care planning process. Plans comprehensively detail children's diverse needs, their uniqueness and strengths. Care planning focuses on achievement, outlining clear targets. This takes into account the child's gender, disability, race, culture, religion, sexuality, dietary, communication and behavioural needs. Expectations of children are high, yet realistic. Care is culturally sensitive and there is a good promotion of their specific needs. Children benefit from individualised support, which takes into account their personality traits. The robust reviewing system highlights children's progress. Extensive photographic evidence and records fully detail the service's positive impact. This includes high quality life story booklets, which children can take with them when they leave.

Children benefit from the home's promotion of all aspects of their well-being. Staff successfully manage a wide range of health conditions, for example there is good management of epilepsy. Children lead a healthy lifestyle, they are losing weight, as recommended by health professionals. The home instigates medication reviews, arranges health appointments and makes the necessary referrals to health agencies. This includes referrals to specialist mental health services. The home provides an extensive range of international and culturally reflective cuisine, with daily choices. Children enjoy freshly prepared meals. Their personal preferences and cultural needs are catered for; this includes halal diets. Exercise is part of children's routines; they regularly enjoy going swimming and walking.

Children live in a large, well-maintained property. Throughout the premises are photographs of children. They are very comfortable in their surroundings and freely access a range of communal areas. Children can relax in the main lounge, which has a large television and a wide range of channels. They are also able to use the soft play room and relax in the sensory room. Mealtimes are a social occasion, where children eat in a designated dining room. There is a separate contact room, where they can also watch television. Upstairs is a recreation room where they can play on the games console. Children can also enjoy the garden which has an outdoor trampoline. All bedrooms are accessible by a small flight of stairs. Children have their own bedrooms, which they can personalise with meaningful items. There is a sufficient number of bathrooms, which have handrails to assist with mobility.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Safeguarding arrangements promote the best interests of children. Children learn the importance of personal safety. This includes road safety, fire safety and private space. All staff undertake regular safeguarding training, they demonstrate a good understanding of safeguarding and state that they are 'confident' in their ability to manage allegations. The home has good links with the Local Safeguarding Children Board and named personnel. This open dialogue enables them to access training,

discuss concerns and keep up-to-date on good practice.

There is a good risk management system. The service regularly updates risk assessments for all aspects of safety. Risk assessments detail concerns, relating to each child. Specific safeguarding body maps are produced to record any marks or bruising. Children are not absent without authority, however, comprehensive missing person's forms are available for each child. The home follows the relevant missing person's protocol. There are no issues with bullying, staff closely supervise children and encourage socially acceptable behaviour.

The home works well with children with challenging needs. The home produces behaviour support plans, which demonstrate a good understanding of each child. Children do not experience sanctions, however, they are occasionally restrained. Staff undertake accredited training in non-violent crisis intervention to ensure the sensitive management of restraints. Children respond well to positive reinforcement, redirection and preventative strategies; they also receive meaningful rewards.

The home provides a secure and safe environment. The vetting of staff meets regulatory requirements. Children receive protection from the home's health and safety practices. The service has a good judgement in relation to their environmental health food hygiene inspection. Certificates and records also confirm regular checks of equipment, water, electrical, gas and fire safety equipment. Children participate in fire drills and they are aware of the need to promptly evacuate the home.

Leadership and management

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

Children's needs and well-being are at the heart of the service's structure. Children highlight that they 'now call MIG House home'. There is a great respect for children and a wish to create a supportive and enabling environment for them. Person centred active support is currently being implemented; the aim is to make the service more young people led. The home's Statement of Purpose was recently updated to reflect the new conditions of registration. Children have their own guide which clearly outlines how the service can enhance their lives. Professionals state they are 'very impressed with the level of care'.

Children benefit from passionate leadership and an experienced culturally diverse staff team. Staff have a good understanding of children's needs. Staffing arrangements are flexible enabling children to receive one-to-one or two-to-one support, if needed. Staff feel they 'work well as a team'. The service takes great care in ensuring staff have the necessary qualities to meet children's complex needs. A structured induction prepares staff for their role. Staff receive regular supervision which they state helps them 'to self reflect' and 'improve' their 'practice and skills'. The home undertakes performance appraisals and creatively include children's views. Staff have the necessary vocational qualification or this is in progress. They also receive a wide range of training to further equip them for their role. Recent training includes equality and diversity, communication, safeguarding and person centred

active support.

Leadership and management within the home are strong. They consistently communicate high expectations to staff about sustaining improvement. Team meetings provide an opportunity for staff to collectively reflect on their practice. The home demonstrates a good capacity for continuing improvement. The recommendation from the last inspection has been addressed. The quality assurance system now takes into account the views of significant persons involved in children's lives in monitoring staff and developing the home. There is a very open dialogue of communication between staff, parents and external agencies. The home constructively learns from complaints, which results in improved outcomes for children. Social workers appreciate the partnership working and state that the home are 'open to suggestions and changes'.

The quality monitoring system is centred on the experience of children. This includes monthly regulatory and feedback questionnaires. There is a good awareness of areas for further development. The manager states these are due to be formally recorded in a service development plan. The manager keeps up-to-date on new developments within social care. This includes accessing the Ofsted website ensuring they are aware of changes and guidance. The home is well resourced and financially viable. Records clearly outline children's' strengths, their progress and how the service enriches their lives. Detailed progress reports positively contributes towards the statutory review 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* and the evaluation schedule for the inspection of children's homes.