

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC065730
Inspector	Rosemary Chapman
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Registered person	Derby City Council
Registered person address	Treasurers Department Council House, Corporation Street DERBY DE1 2FE
Responsible individual	Elizabeth Johnston
Registered manager	Elizabeth Gaskin
Date of last inspection	18/03/2014

Inspection date	30/10/2014
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Previous inspection	good progress
Enforcement action since last inspection	none

This inspection	
Overall effectiveness	good
Outcomes for children and young people	good
Quality of care	outstanding
Keeping children and young people safe	good
Leadership and management	good

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	good
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This is a good service overall. Children and young people achieve good outcomes and have access to a variety of different experiences and opportunities which some of them may otherwise not have. They are safe, happy and look forward to the time they spend at this home. They have very positive relationships with the staff that care for them.

The quality of care and support which the staff provide is outstanding. This is fully supported by detailed and individual plans of care which are devised in conjunction with parents and other professionals to ensure continuity and consistency in every aspect of a child's support needs. Children with complex healthcare needs behaviours and communication are very well supported to achieve as much as possible. Each child is seen as an individual; staff know and understand the children's needs very well and choice is promoted at all times.

Parents have every confidence in the staff; one parent rated the service as, '11 out of 10', and commented, 'I totally trust them.' Communication is good and the service tries to respond flexibly in emergency situations by, for example, offering an extra night if possible, or enabling parents to use the homes' facilities. This flexible approach to supporting families ultimately benefits the children as it enables their parents to continue to care for them.

The home is managed very effectively by a small management team, which also includes nursing staff. This promotes cooperative working so that both health and social care needs are fully met and seen as of equal importance. All staff are passionate about their work and fully committed to the children and young people. They are supported by good and regular supervision, training and accessible managers. The ethos of the home promotes continual improvement, and the manager is constantly looking for ways to make things better for the children and young people who have short breaks.

One recommendation to improve the robustness of staff recruitment procedures has been made as a result of this inspection.

Full report

Information about this children's home

This local authority home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to 10 children and young people with sensory impairment and learning and physical disabilities under short break arrangements.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
18/03/2014	Interim	good progress
18/12/2013	Full	good
20/02/2013	Interim	good progress
30/11/2012	Full	good

What does the children's home need to do to improve further?

Recommendations

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

- ensure that telephone enquiries are made as well as obtaining written references for staff. (NMS 16.1)

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **good**

Outcomes for the children and young people who have short breaks at this service are good. They continue to make progress in many areas of their lives and have opportunities to try new activities and experiences. Their health needs, some of which are very complex, are fully met, which enables them to enjoy their time at the home and benefit from the experience. They continue with their educational placements while having a short break, their attendance is very good and they achieve well. Children and young people benefit from the continuity and consistency of care in health and education and therefore continue to reach or exceed their targets.

Children and young people develop their skills as a result of attending this service. For example, they improve their communication skills, their independent living skills and their self-care skills. This prepares them for adult life. They also improve their social skills as a result of group living with their peers. They develop new friendships and learn to cooperate.

Children and young people develop their sense of self and improve their self-confidence because they are treated as individuals and consulted about what they would like to do. Their communication skills improve because staff are committed to giving them a voice and try a variety of methods to facilitate this. They are enabled to achieve things they may otherwise not achieve, such as going to the shops and buying items. This makes them feel part of the community. They improve their small motor skills because they engage in craft activities and cooking. All achievements, however small, are celebrated, which results in children and young people feeling proud of themselves and developing their confidence to try other new things and develop more skills.

Many of the children and young people who access the service have complex behaviours as a consequence of their disability. These improve, and as a result, the children and young people benefit from social activities such as going out in the community, shopping and having fun. This helps children and young people grow in confidence, cope with busy environments and access public places.

Family relationships improve as a result of the short break. Parents are confident that their child is safe, well cared for and happy. This enables parents to use the short period of respite effectively, such as spending quality time with other children in the family, catching up with household chores or having a much-needed rest.

Quality of care

outstanding

The relationships between the children and young people and staff are excellent. Staff are exceptionally skilful, caring, respectful and enthusiastic. They want children and young people to have a really enjoyable short break, be well supported and make as much progress as possible. Staff know the children exceptionally well; one parent commented, 'the staff know my child nearly as well as I do.' Children and young people are all treated as individuals and their specific needs are respected and well attended to.

The planning of the short breaks is of an exceptional quality. Staff ensure that children and young people with similar needs, abilities and interests attend at the same time and friendships are fully supported. Short breaks for children and young people who, because of their behaviour, may pose a risk to other children or young people who are more vulnerable, are carefully managed through increased supervision and matching. Parents also acknowledge that the home does the matching very well.

It is very clear that children and young people are consulted constantly about what they wish to do, down to the finest detail, such as which cereal they would like to use as the basis for making cakes, even if this choice then results in two different types of cake being made. Staff use a variety of ways of communication, depending on which child or young person they are working with. This includes signs, symbols, pictures as well as verbal communication. Staff try their utmost to ensure they can understand the child or young person as well as being understood themselves. They are innovative and imaginative in their approach, using social stories and symbol strips, for example, and their successes are then mirrored by parents to further improve communication at home. Children's and young people's wishes and feelings are now recorded more consistently. This enables staff and the manager to highlight more clearly and easily their likes, dislikes and aspirations.

The short break care plans are of an exceptionally high quality. They are devised in conjunction with the child/young person where possible, their parents and other professionals and give comprehensive detail about how all of a child's or young person's needs should be met. These include pictures and photographs where appropriate, for example, where moving and handling are issues, so that staff have absolute clarity about what to do. The plans include the whole range of needs, including those relating to culture and religion. This ensures that staff have consistent guidance about how to support young people who have very complex needs. The plans are regularly monitored and reviewed to ensure they are effective. Each child or young person has some targets which are agreed at statutory reviews, which involve parents, other professionals and the child/young person themselves if possible, and are closely monitored. This enables the home to demonstrate the impact it is having on a child's or young person's progress.

Many of the children and young people who access the service have very complex health needs. The home is staffed with qualified nurses 24 hours a day to ensure that all healthcare needs are managed by specialist staff with the right skills and

experience. Only the nursing staff administer medication under strict guidelines. This ensures medication is given safely to promote the children's health and well-being. Staff also work in close partnership with other professionals involved in the child's life, such as the complex behaviour team, speech and language therapists and occupational therapists. This promotes continuity and consistency of care. High staffing levels ensure that even children or young people with the most complex of needs and behaviour have these well met.

All the children and young people have educational placements which they attend when they are at home. The staff ensure these arrangements continue uninterrupted while children and young people are having a short break. They have excellent relationships with the schools which young people attend. Key workers meet regularly with education staff, they attend reviews, and one member of staff is a governor at one of the local schools attended by some of the young people to further enhance cooperative working.

Children and young people usually access the service for one overnight stay at a time; occasionally they may have two nights in a row, depending on their needs and circumstances. Staff ensure this short break is as enjoyable and effective as possible. Many of the young people are able to do things they cannot do at home, thus enriching their lives, their experiences and their enjoyment. For example, because of the space in the home and the security of the premises and garden, children and young people can run around far more freely than is possible in their own homes. Other children and young people enjoy baths or access the community, which because of their home circumstances are usually impossible. Some enjoy having their nails painted and being pampered. There are also occasional trips further afield, facilitated by the recent purchase of a minibus.

The home is very well located in the community. It is purpose built and provides a lot of space, individual en-suite bedrooms and a secure garden with a variety of play equipment. This facilitates very positive experiences. It also provides sensory rooms, specialist baths, a variety of beds and overhead tracking so that the children and young people with more complex physical needs can be appropriately cared for. Its security also ensures that the children and young people are safe.

Keeping children and young people safe good

Children and young people are safe and happy during their short breaks. This is due to the high staffing levels which enable staff to supervise all the children and young people very well and thus prevent them from coming to any harm. Clear strategies and risk assessments for every child or young person who accesses the service give staff comprehensive guidance about how to protect young people from risks either from themselves or others. For example, in some instances, staff place themselves between young people who are separately engaged in activities to protect them from unpredictable behaviour. This is done in a very discreet way so it does not look

intrusive or prevent any activity from taking place.

Children and young people who access this service do not go missing because of the high level of staff supervision and the security of the premises. However, they each have a protocol for staff to follow in the unlikely event that this may occur. Similarly, they do not engage in risk-taking behaviour such as drug or alcohol misuse. Nonetheless, staff place safeguarding children at the centre of their practice and are very aware of the potential risks and dangers which such very vulnerable young people may face. Staff have had training in how to safeguard children and are supported by underpinning policies and procedures which make their responsibilities clear. Staff demonstrate a sound awareness of how to manage any possible allegations or suspicions of abuse so that children's safety and well-being are promoted.

Some children and young people display complex behaviours. Thus each child or young person has a detailed behaviour management plan which is implemented well, minimising the need for physical intervention or sanctions. This proactive and detailed approach is effective because there have been no sanctions since 2012. The two physical interventions which have occurred since the last inspection were carried out appropriately, with good managerial oversight. A new system for recording has been implemented to further improve managerial monitoring.

Staff are recruited following good practice guidance. However, telephone verification to referees is not consistently carried out. This is a recommended additional safeguard to make the recruitment practice more robust.

The children and young people's safety and well-being are further promoted by being in a safe environment. The building and gardens are secure, preventing unauthorised access. Appropriate safety checks are carried out at regular intervals, including fire tests and drills. Young people have a personal evacuation plan so that staff are fully aware of how to assist them out of the building in the event of a fire. Staff also have access to resources as part of the fire evacuation plan, such as attractive toys and wrist straps. These are used to encourage those young people who may be reluctant to leave, and protect those who may run away, and thereby facilitate an evacuation in as comfortable and safe way as possible.

Leadership and management

good

The home is effectively managed by a Registered Manager who has been in this post for three years. She has a wealth of residential childcare experience and is appropriately qualified, possessing a National Vocational Qualification at level 4 in care and a post graduate qualification in management studies.

The manager and staff promote an ethos of openness and transparency, encouraging parents, children and stakeholders to voice their views. Two complaints from parents

have been made since the last inspection. Both of these were addressed promptly and resolved to the complainants' satisfaction. Appropriate learning took place and systems improved to prevent a reoccurrence of the issues raised.

The manager and staff team demonstrate a desire to continue to develop and improve the service. Although no requirements or recommendations were raised at the last inspection, one area of improvement relates to consultation with children and young people and a greater emphasis on their wishes and feelings. Additionally, the manager has arranged for the purchase of a minibus for the service to improve access to the community.

The Statement of Purpose has been recently updated and is on the website, thus improving its accessibility to parents, stakeholders and anyone who wishes to know what to expect from the service. The children's guide is currently under review to make it more relevant for the children who use the service. The manager utilises the skills of particular staff members to make such improvements, thereby promoting a team approach and staff development as well as ensuring the most appropriate person does the best job.

The manager undertakes regular monitoring of the home and submits the report of this to HMCI, Ofsted as required. A further improvement since the last inspection has been the recent reinstatement of young people's meetings for those who are able to contribute. This has resulted in some good suggestions to improve the service which the manager intends to implement. External monitoring is also regular and effective; these monthly visits generate thorough reports with suggestions for improvement which the manager acts on. The manager has clear targets for the service, which are updated as they are either completed or new targets are added. This demonstrates an ongoing approach to service development. One area which is under review is the monitoring of children's progress. There is a system which is currently used but a member of the management team has been tasked to review this to improve upon it and make it more effective.

There is an effective system to notify appropriate authorities of all significant events relating to the protection of young people living at the home. This ensures that all relevant parties can assess and monitor the appropriateness of the action taken by the home to protect a young person, and thereby ensure their welfare is promoted.

The home is well resourced, with nursing staff, residential childcare workers and ancillary staff. Staff are appropriately qualified to ensure they are competent to undertake their specialist roles. Mandatory training is regularly updated, and staff share their expertise in team meetings, although this is not consistently recorded as training or staff development. This is an area which could be developed further. Staff feel well supported. Managers are accessible, provide opportunities for reflective supervision on a regular basis and undertake annual staff appraisals. These systems ensure that managers are aware of any areas of staff performance which need further development or which are particularly good.

Staff and managers work well in partnership with other professionals. The co-location of social work and other staff, such as occupational therapists and community support workers, is of great benefit in facilitating easy and prompt communication.

Children's records are securely stored but accessible to the children and young people as appropriate. For example, one young person was looking through her file and making alterations to it during the inspection. Staff take photographs of activities, and once a young person leaves the service, they are provided with a memory book of their time in the home.

What inspection judgements mean

Judgement	Description
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.

Information 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 framework of inspection for children's homes.