

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC066651
Inspection date	15/11/2013
Inspector	Ann-Marie Born
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	28/01/2013
--------------------------------	------------

© Crown copyright 2013

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Service information

Brief description of the service

The home is run by a local authority as part of its service to children with disabilities and their families. The home offers residential short break care to six young people with severe learning disabilities, some of whom have complex and challenging behaviour.

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**.

This is a good home overall. The management team are ambitious for children and young people to achieve to the best of their abilities from their starting points while enjoying their respite stays. This level of motivation provides children and young people with a safe, caring and stimulating environment. As a result children and young people's individual holistic and cultural belonging is respected; they maintain and improve their educational attainment and achieve in areas of physical and emotional well-being. A parent stated: 'it's a perfect place for kids, faultless, it's safe and they get to do so much there and be happy.'

Very good care plans ensure that all of a child and young person's assessed needs are identified and addressed. Children and young people enjoy very good relationships with staff and enjoy the time they spend with them. Children and young people are consistently described as very happy in the home where they feel cared for, valued and protected. One parent said: 'he does really enjoy going there, he really enjoys the overnights,' and another 'first of all she's very happy when she's there.'

Good safeguarding processes and conscientious attention to detail ensure children and young people are safe. They evidently feel safe in the home where their safety and welfare are paramount. Strong partnership working with parents and professionals ensure that children and young people, who often have very complex needs, are able to benefit from good behaviour management plans which promote their progress as well as safety. A social worker commented: 'they play a very crucial

role in supporting families. As a result of their input we have feedback about progress. The families are very relaxed as a result of the relationship they build up with staff and can learn more about how to manage their children's behaviour.'

The manager is aware of the changes needed to make improvement in the home and is in the process of doing so. However, although staff and management are aware of immediate changes to care plans, these are not always recorded therefore have not been appropriately audited. Further areas to improve include ensuring the children's guide is made available in formats appropriate to the understanding of children and young people; ensuring that medical assistance is available to be called upon following any episode of restraint; that all children and young people have participated in an emergency evacuation practice and that all staff are provided with regular supervision.

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
4 (2001)	ensure that the children's guide is produced in a form appropriate to the age, understanding and communication needs of the children to be accommodated in the home (Regulation 4 (4))	31/12/2013
12 (2001)	ensure that the registered person keeps under review and revises placement plans as necessary. (Regulation 12 (2))	31/12/2013

Recommendations

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

- ensure that where there has been physical restraint, children's homes must be able to call on medical assistance as required and children are always given the opportunity to be examined by a registered nurse or medical practitioner (NMS 3.16)
- ensure there is an emergency escape plan that all staff and children are familiar with and have practised so they know what to do in an emergency (NMS 10.9)
- ensure that staff are provided with regular supervision by appropriately qualified and experienced staff. (NMS 19.4)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Children and young people make good progress in developing a positive self-view and make sustainable attachments with staff and each other. As a result their feelings of self-worth improve and they gain confidence in their abilities to make friendships. A parent commented, 'she's made a lot of progress with her talking and social skills.'

Children and young people's holistic health needs are well met and they enjoy a balanced diet which maintains healthy outcomes. Where children and young people have complex health and behavioural needs, appropriate professionals regularly contribute to their plans and care. This ensures children and young people benefit from a multidisciplinary approach and perspective to their needs. In addition, as a result of very good attention to basic health and self-care skills requirements, children and young people develop necessary life skills, for example, toileting. This effectively boosts self-esteem and assists in preparation for transition to other settings or in to semi-independence. A staff member stated: 'since I've been here there have been five children that have begun formal toileting and we will work towards the plans put in place. It seems so basic but it makes such a big difference to how they can live their own lives.'

Children and young people are encouraged and enabled to participate in a range of inclusive physical activities as part of their daily routine. This effectively promotes social, emotional and physical development. Where possible staff encourage broader interests and think creatively about what children and young people may enjoy. For example, substituting a walk in the community for time on the computer which also has the benefit of improving sleep patterns. A social worker commented, 'they have the opportunity to spend time with other young people their own age outside of school which they wouldn't normally have.'

Good liaison with schools ensures a consistent approach to learning and that children and young people are well supported to achieve personal goals. Staff input is described as being 'crucial in reintegrating young people back in to education provision.' In addition, positive and fun educational activities within the home enable children and young people to further develop their skills, including learning the alphabet. Consequently children and young people broaden their learning skills and have an increased confidence in their basic abilities. For some young people there is a marked improvement from their starting points and they take great pride in being able to share those abilities with others. A young person wrote: 'I actually taught someone how to do it (spelling) at (name). I like it because it's educational for them.'

Children and young people grow in self-esteem and security in their place in the home and community as a result of involvement in inclusive activities. For example, choosing decoration and colours for the home and the innovative practice of designing their own Christmas cards. These are then sold to raise funds which further benefit children and young people as the money raised is used to enhance

their stays, for example, more equipment for the sensory room.

Children and young people fully benefit from the strong partnership working between staff and parents. As a result of those positive relationships, children and young people receive consistent messages and care and any achievements are recognised and built upon. Children and young people's individual, holistic and cultural needs, coupled with their practical and life skills are carefully assessed and reviewed on a regular basis. This enables effective tailoring of holistic independence skill requirements. As a result, children and young people learn skills that will assist them in their day-to-day lives, in transition to future care provision or in to semi-independent living. This can include using the telephone, making a drink, dressing themselves or recognising when they need to go to the toilet. Consequently, children and young people consistently feel included and valued enhancing their sense of belonging. A parent stated: 'they are very good at keeping in contact with me and letting me know what is going on.'

Quality of care

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

There has been a high level of staff sickness over the past year. Nevertheless the commitment of the management team and core staff members has ensured that the quality of care has been maintained to a good level. Good quality planning ensures children and young people enjoy their respite stays together with staff who understand them.

Strong and caring relationships built on a basis of knowledge and understanding enable children and young people to interact positively with staff and each other. Wherever possible children and young people's views are captured in order to inform their care. Young people who are able, take great pride in sharing their views on care for all and acknowledging to themselves and others the impact their views have had on care. A young person wrote, 'I do help give advice to the staff.'

Irrespective of the communication and mobility barriers they experience, children and young people develop good, warm relationships with staff and each other. Regular house meetings, communication with parents and one-to-one time with staff enable children and young people to effectively express their wishes. Children and young people's individual communication methods are understood and listened to. Consequently they are able to choose whether to spend time alone, engage with staff or participate in fun, social time with each other and on activities. As a result, children and young people feel valued, that they will be listened to and understand the importance of expressing their views. A social worker said, 'it is a very caring and warm environment and all the young people get to do their own thing while being supported well.'

Children and young people are fully supported to understand how to make a complaint within their level of understanding. Parents are kept fully informed and the committed, enthusiastic staff team view themselves strongly as advocates for

children and young people. This enhances children and young people's sense of security and belonging. There have not been any complaints and a parent stated: 'they keep me informed. There are no problems at all, it's perfect.'

Children and young people receive excellent care in line with extremely good care plans which comprehensively assess and action their needs. The majority of these plans are kept fully up to date but on occasion there have been omissions in updating plans to reflect current changes. For example, the use of alternative methods to ensure a young person takes their medication. Children and young people's holistic, cultural, gender specific and disability needs are comprehensively identified and positively planned for. In addition, young people's burgeoning sexual awareness is sensitively acknowledged and specific care planned to address any resultant behaviours. As a result young people feel, and are, valued as individuals.

The proactive and nurturing staff team maintains good relationships with requisite health professionals ensuring children and young people's assessed health needs are met. Good processes for the administration of medication, coupled with innovative methods utilised for individual children, ensure that they receive their medication appropriately even when they are resistant to take this. A social worker said: 'if there are particular issues around health, they are very good at updating risk assessments to make sure that the child gets the best care they possibly can and can make progress.'

Staff are ambitious for young people to succeed as much as they can from their starting points. They use innovative and fun sessions with young people to complement education programmes. They also support education settings with behaviour management techniques. This allows children and young people to reintegrate and remain in school therefore furthering their education and life skills potential. A young person wrote: 'we don't just do activities, we also do literacy paragraphs. Reading, we also learn maths activities. We've all learnt the alphabet. We enjoy learning how to share.'

Children and young people enjoy their stays in a home that has been purpose built and designed to meet their needs. The spacious rooms and wide range of activities are maintained to a good level ensuring that children and young people fully benefit throughout their stays. Inclusive activities both within the home and community provide children and young people with enjoyable new experiences, many of which they would not be able to participate in otherwise. This effectively improves children and young people's social skills and self-esteem. A parent said: 'there is the biggest smile on her face and she's very excited when she's going there. I know it's because she has a lot to do there that she couldn't do here.'

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Children and young people are safe and protected from harm in a home where their safeguarding is a priority. Excellent incident recording is effectively monitored by the

manager. This ensures that all incidents are learnt from thus protecting children and young people and enabling them to learn some consequences for their behaviours. One parent said, 'safety wise they are very safe' and another 'he is safe there'.

Exceptional individual risk assessments are coupled with good health and safety procedures and a strong missing person protocol. These ensure that children and young people do not go missing from this home. However, clear procedures ensure that staff would know what to do if they did.

Some children and young people display challenging and complex behaviours which present risks and trials to keep them and staff safe. Extremely good individual behaviour management strategies are jointly developed with all people involved in a young person's care and are consistently applied. This allows the majority of children and young people to understand the difference between positive and negative behaviours. In addition, the strong relationships between staff, children and young people mean that, for the most part, children and young people do not exhibit negative behaviours. Social workers commented that 'because they understand the child's behaviour they work very closely with school and us' and 'what has been put in place is the best thing to keep him and other young people safe.'

Any sanctions imposed are proportionate, appropriate and monitored by the manager for effectiveness. Restraint is rarely used and children and young people are safeguarded by the staff's training and knowledge of appropriate techniques. However, they are not always offered the opportunity to be examined by a medical practitioner therefore their full safety cannot be certain.

Appropriate local authority recruitment procedures ensure that staff are carefully selected before appointment. Stringent monitoring procedures help prevent unsuitable people from having the opportunity to harm children and young people. Staff are well aware of their safeguarding responsibilities and reporting arrangements. Staff's current knowledge is maintained through refreshing their training; exploring different safeguarding scenarios at team meetings and good debrief sessions at the end of each shift. Children and young people's safety and security are assured as a result. A staff member, 'safety has got to be paramount.'

Individual risk assessments and personal evacuation plans ensure that all of a young person's holistic and diverse needs are assessed and addressed. This includes addressing any restrictions imposed by children and young people's physical needs and level of understanding. Good health and safety procedures are effectively followed ensuring children and young people's well-being is maintained. They are further protected by the excellent individual personal evacuation plans which ensure that staff know how to individually guide a child or young person out of the building if there were to be an emergency. However, fire evacuation drills have not taken place at suitable intervals therefore they have not all had the opportunity to practise an evacuation.

Leadership and management

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

The conscientious and committed manager understands the needs of all of the children and young people in his care very well. There was a change in management as the deputy manager 'acted up' in the manager's absence while he was completing professional training. This has not had a detrimental effect on the children and young people accessing the centre because the managers have remained people they know and who are still working in the setting. Children and young people's welfare is promoted and their sense of belonging enhanced as that consistency has been maintained.

There was only one recommendation made at the last inspection. This has not been met because the children's guide is not available in a range of appropriate formats to meet the needs of the children and young people in the home. Therefore this has been raised to a requirement following this inspection. The home is operating in line with a comprehensive Statement of Purpose that clearly details what the home provides, how needs will be met and the objectives of the care.

The manager has worked hard to improve a range of monitoring tools. These fully benefit children and young people as the new risk assessments identify and address behaviour management issues earlier. This provides children and young people further opportunities to learn positive behaviours thus enabling them to enjoy their stay even more. In addition, the new internal auditing reports are more evaluative and identify direct ways of working in partnership with parents and professionals to provide consistent, targeted care for children and young people. A social worker stated: '(name) have all of the facilities the young people need and staff understand them. They play a crucial role in what we do and they are very supportive to families.'

Individual children and young people's files evidence the progress they have made. The manager ensures that the home is maintained and equipped to a high level. The manager uses fund raising activities positively to obtain more equipment for young people. For example, children and young people are involved in the Christmas fete and design the home's Christmas cards. This promotes inclusion and a sense of belonging while bolstering self-esteem and feelings of self-worth.

Children and young people are cared for by staff who are experienced and well trained to meet their needs. For the majority of the time high staffing levels ensure children and young people are fully safeguarded and all of their needs are met. However, there has been some unavoidable staff sickness meaning that on occasion a number of staff have not been available for work. The conscientious and committed manager has ensured that this has not had an impact on the care of young people but this has impacted on levels of staff supervision sessions. Staff report that their supervision is beneficial and of a high quality and some supervision records indicate that supervision is taking place at appropriate intervals. However, there are inconsistent levels of supervision therefore not all staff are receiving all of the support that they should.

Records are clear, up to date, stored securely and contribute to an understanding of children and young people's life experiences and plans for their future. A young person wrote: 'at (name) we all try our hardest to try different things at different aims. Like doing spelling. Everyone at (name) are big helps to achieve goals like independence.'

Children and young people are protected by the reporting of any significant events to appropriate authorities within a timely manner. This ensures a multi-agency approach to their care and safeguards them.

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.