

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Keith Riley
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This Local Authority children's home provides care and support for a maximum of 16 children with complex needs. The home can accommodate children and young people with both physical and learning disabilities, some of whom may display 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**.

Children, with a variety of complex needs, stay in a nurturing and supportive environment in which they receive a good standard of personalised care. Seeking the views of children with communication difficulties is integral to how the home operates. A motivated and committed staff team secures positive outcomes for children who live in this home. Although staff receive good training that is regularly refreshed, records do not clearly illustrate this.

The close working relationships with external agencies, such as health, contribute very effectively to promoting and protecting the welfare of children. Children are safe in this home, they say they feel safe. They relax in an environment where there are positive relationships with those around them. Although one area adjacent to the home has been risk assessed for fire and precautions have been taken, the fire and rescue service has not been consulted. The area is used infrequently and children are not at immediate risk.

Children benefit from the consistent strategies that are applied through staff working closely with parents and educational professionals to ensure a consistent approach. There are very effective systems in place to ensure the most up-to-date information is known to the entire team.

The Registered Manager is very aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the home and is implementing positive developments. Changes to some written management systems and improvements to the environment means that children benefit from a

home that is seeking to continually develop and improve its service. However, some repairs, already identified by the management, have not been completed within a reasonable timeframe.

One other shortfall was that one event requiring notification to Ofsted had not been submitted.

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
30 (2001)	ensure, if any of the events listed in column 1 of the table in schedule 5 takes place, the registered person shall without delay notify the persons indicated in respect of the event in column 2 of the table (Regulation 30 (1))	31/08/2012
31 (2001)	ensure all parts of the children's home used by children are kept in good structural repair, in particular the dividing wall and specialised bathroom (Regulation 31 (1)(d))	03/08/2012
32 (2001)	ensure, after consultation with the fire and rescue authority, there are adequate precautions taken against the risk of fire, including the provision of suitable fire equipment (Regulation 32 (1)(a))	03/08/2012

Recommendations

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

- review the procedures for monitoring and controlling the activities of the home, in particular staff training records (NMS 21.1)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Children are happy to stay in a nurturing environment where they receive highly individualised support. They say, 'I enjoy my time at the home and I like my new bedroom.' Children are improving their confidence and self-esteem and have a better understanding of their abilities. Positive relationships are established with staff who are highly attuned to the individual and complex needs of children with

communication difficulties. Children benefit from staff who understand what they are trying to communicate. This means that children have choice during their stay and are able to work on individual goals to maximise their potential. Key staff ensure there are detailed and clear plans underpinning the support and these are effectively communicated to the entire team. Close working with parents and other professionals ensures there is consistency of approach. Parents comment positively on the outcomes their children achieve describing it as 'miraculous'.

Children are encouraged and supported as much as possible in adopting healthy lifestyles. This includes healthy home-cooked meals using fresh ingredients as much as possible. They are given healthy options for snacks and grow their own fruit and vegetables supported by staff. Meal times are an ordered social occasion with staff supporting children with their social interaction. Other strategies are used to promote good health such as purposeful recreational activities in the community. These include roller skating, walking or swimming. They enjoy other activities within the home such as soft play and using the sensory room. Children's confidence, self-esteem and social skills are continually being developed. They say the activities are 'great'.

Staff are very aware of children's health needs. Staff have specific training, for example, in managing epilepsy and the administration of emergency medication, to ensure that children's physical health is supported effectively. Issues such as weight gain and epilepsy are very well monitored and responded to. For example, staff are acutely aware of the signs an individual child may show prior to a seizure and implement the clear guidelines about how to respond in an emergency. Staff advocate on children's behalf where health services fail to meet identified needs and agree protocols for future care. Children's privacy and dignity are protected using individual risk assessments that address specific issues. Staff are sensitive to the changing needs of children as they grow up. All necessary consents are on file such as permission to administer medication and administer first aid when necessary. There is a holistic approach to health.

Education is highly valued and children's attendance at school is very good. Staff complete a daily diary on each child which is shared with school staff. This enables staff to effectively communicate across settings about issues that are impacting on the child thereby promoting a consistency of care.

Staff provide an individualised and structured home environment that focuses on developing self-care and social skills. Children show improvements in important areas of their lives such as learning how to brush their teeth, dress themselves or enjoying regular and social meal time routines.

Children have excellent contact with their parents and staff are accessible to discuss the current and future needs of the children. Staff are committed to helping children to maintain these important relationships so they have a sense of identity and belonging. Staff work with parents to prepare children for their placement, for example, through the use of a comprehensive children's guide written in a format the child understands.

Quality of care

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

Children who present with a wide range of needs associated with disabilities receive a good quality of personalised care. They are very happy in the company of staff and enjoy positive and constructive relationships with them. Children benefit from staff who know their individual needs very well and are able to communicate effectively with them. Children say that staff are great. Professionals say staff are, 'doing a pretty good job with a complex child.' The consistent and individual approach adopted by staff means that children develop skills, for example being able to instigate communication. Consequently children feel relaxed and settled in this home.

Staff have consistently high aspirations for children and support their educational placements. Robust communication and joint visits ensure a consistency of care between the home and school. There is 100% attendance in education. Education needs for each child are identified through a personal education plan. Children make good progress in relation to their starting points.

Children access the wide range of activity equipment on-site, including a soft play area, a sensory room and a games room. They enjoy activities in the community ranging from bowling and swimming to cinema and walking. Their confidence, self-esteem and social skills develop as a result.

Children are thriving in a very caring and supportive environment. Children are responding very positively to the structure, routine and consistency that staff bring to their lives. Professionals say there is co-operative working with consistent staff and routines; this results in positive outcomes. Parents are very pleased with the quality of care provided and say that the children are happy.

Children's views are promoted and seen as central to running the home. They benefit from staff who understand their particular method of communication. This means that children have a voice in the home and their views strongly influence the planning of their care such as the choice of activities. Children say they are listened to. There is little need to access the formal complaints system. There has been one complaint since the last inspection that was dealt with robustly.

Children have their needs assessed effectively. Detailed placement plans provide clear guidance on the individual needs of children and the support that they need on a daily basis. Family backgrounds and the cultural identity of each young person is positively addressed. This helps staff to understand each young person as an individual. Children are looked after by a dedicated and well trained staff team. Their needs are very well understood by staff who respond to any signs of discomfort and anxiety promptly which ensures that their health, safety and welfare is promoted.

Staff work exceptionally well with parents, social workers and other agencies to promote children's welfare. Parents feel they can talk to staff about their child's care

as often as they like and that staff keep them fully informed of their child's progress. When planning the overnight stays for children staff match the care needs of children. This ensures that young people who may exhibit challenging behaviour are not placed with vulnerable young people who have complex care needs. Children's experience of the home is positive and they indicate that they enjoy coming to stay. Feedback from parents is extremely positive; comments include, 'you must be looking after my child very well' and, 'I am happy with the support given to my child.'

Staff are consistently concerned with the welfare of the children they are supporting. There is a good knowledge of the care plans unique to each individual including the positive behaviour strategies to be used. Staff are unquestionably committed to de-escalation techniques when presented with challenging behaviours. As a result children benefit from the calm environment and situations do not escalate. The management highly values the attitude and ethos of staff that creates this culture. Incidents are analysed and possible triggers are identified and positive corrective action taken such as updates to risk assessments and positive behaviour management plans. Staff speak positively of this approach and the support they receive. This approach reduces the number of significant incidents for children requiring physical intervention.

There is a commitment to provide a pleasant living environment and the home is maintained to a high standard. The management are aware of and pro-active in following up known issues within the home. However, some major repair or replacement work, such as a broken dividing wall and specialised bathroom facility, have not been fixed within prompt timescales.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Children say they feel safe in the home. Children were observed to be relaxed and 'at home' during their stay. Children who have a history of going missing from care do not go missing from this setting. Positive behaviour is promoted and children are supported in diverting inappropriate behaviour into more positive experiences, such as soft play or use of the garden. Staff are trained in physical intervention techniques. However, incidents of restraint are rare, when used they are of a low level and extremely short duration. Meticulous records are kept, incidents analysed and future practice is informed. This means that triggers are identified and children are supported to develop their self-management competences.

Staff receive regular training on safeguarding and child protection. They are aware of the home's child protection procedures and have a good understanding of their role in responding to concerns or disclosures. Staff are vigilant at completing body maps for any marks they observe on children. They seek appropriate support and advice to conclude children are not at risk of harm. Children are protected from being cared for by unsuitable adults through the robust recruitment procedures. The extreme vulnerabilities of the children are understood by all members of staff and this ensures that their approach to ensuring their safety is conscientious and rigorous. The culture

embedded in the home ensures that the children benefit from a robust and rigorous approach which treats the children's emotional and physical safety as paramount.

Children benefit from high staffing levels which provide for appropriate supervision and the effective management of risk. Consideration is given to the compatibility of groups when arranging programs. This means that bullying is not identified as an issue at the home or that there is a negative impact on a child due to the known behaviour of another.

Individual risk assessments, carried out in conjunction with parents, ensure that children can access appropriate activities safely inside and outside the home. Staff demonstrate excellent knowledge of procedures to be followed, for example, in the event of a child having a seizure or in the routine administration of medication.

The environment is subject to stringent checks and assessments. All specialist equipment is checked regularly and occupational therapists assess each child's needs to ensure the use of the equipment is appropriate and safe. Positive steps are taken to ensure that children are safe from fire and know how to evacuate in the event of an emergency. However, the fire and rescue authority have not been consulted in relation to the precautions in place for one building adjacent to the home. This room is used infrequently and therefore children are not at immediate risk.

There are individual behaviour management plans in place for each young person. These ensure that the members of staff supporting them know what situations may trigger distressing or challenging behaviour and what strategies are to be used to support them. The children's learning disabilities may mean that they do not understand the concept of sanctions and so these are very rarely imposed unless deemed appropriate in their individual plans.

Leadership and management

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

The home is well resourced and is being effectively managed by an established manager who has significant residential childcare experience. The management structure is strengthened by deputy managers, principal child care officers and seniors with clear accountabilities. Good quality care and improvement is maintained.

The Registered Manager has a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the home and is implementing positive developments. Good leadership ensures staff work well as a team and this provides a high degree of consistency of care for children and in meeting the aims and objectives of the service.

Staff are subject to a comprehensive induction programme and must satisfy the management of their competencies during a probation period. They undertake regulatory and service-specific training which provides them with the skills and knowledge required to meet the demanding needs of the children. Specialist training, such as critical debrief training or administration of emergency medication, is

provided when necessary. However, staff records do not clearly demonstrate the good training that staff are receiving. Children are living in a home where morale is high and they are cared for by staff who are well trained and supported themselves. Children speak of the home as being good and are upbeat about their relationships with management and staff.

Regular audits of policies, procedures and practice take place, these are rigorous. For instance, monthly visits are undertaken by an external auditor, restraints logs, sanctions logs and risk assessments are regularly monitored to ensure that systems operate in accordance with and above the minimum standards. There is good compliance to recommendations and actions made at previous inspections carried out by Ofsted. However, there was one incident, since the last inspection, requiring notification to Ofsted that was not notified; this had no negative impact on children.

Children benefit from good staffing ratios and effective management enabling them to have the necessary individual attention. Regular team meetings discuss the well-being of the children and their individual needs. Staff view children in a positive light and focus on improving their behaviours through identifying small, achievable targets for each young person. Key staff ensure plans are under constant review and that children receive constant encouragement to fulfil their potential. Children take pride in themselves and develop a positive identity.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. There are consistent working practices which focus on enhancing young people's quality of life. Staff show a good understanding in relation to sexual identity and awareness of any issues that could arise.

The provider meets the aims and objectives in their Statement of Purpose. Staff succeed in providing a stable, structured and very safe environment for young people. Care practices help young people to develop their skills and contribute towards their personal growth.

Records are stored securely and give a good history of each young person's progress and experiences at the home. Records such as placement plans or key-worker notes are detailed and address individual needs, whether these are behavioural, medical, cultural or religious, to a good standard.

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.