

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Tola Akinde-Hummel
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This service is owned and managed by a limited company. It is fully funded by a local authority for the exclusive use by families and children who live in this borough. It is a respite service for children and young people who have a disability. This includes children and young people with emotional or behavioural difficulties, physical and learning disabilities, sensory and communication impairment and those who have an autistic spectrum disorder.

The home is registered for eight children and young people at any time. The home also provides an after-school activity club and a support for a group of mothers of children with disabilities of minority ethnic origin.

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 **outstanding**.

This home provides an excellent service to children and young people who make excellent progress in the home due to the confidence they and their parents and carers have in the manager and the staff.

Children and young people thrive in this environment because they are supported by staff that are well trained, conscientious and committed to improving their lives. A key strength of the home is their ability to communicate with all stakeholders.

Parents and carers consistently describe the home as safe, warm and caring. One parent said, 'this service is priceless to my son and our family. He looks forward to his time here and loves all the children and staff alike. I don't know how I would cope without them and hope I never have to!'

The management of the home is strong. There is a positive attitude from all staff towards the children and young people. Principally children and young people are always encouraged to express their preferences and are listened to. One member of staff said, 'the difference about this home is we ask children and young people what

they want to do, not make them do things, they always have a choice.'

Children and young people develop their independent living skills and take the many opportunities on offer to participate in activities available in the wider community.

Young people physical and emotional well-being is sensitively addressed making use of collaborative work with other professionals.

One recommendation focuses on the content of individual risk assessments.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure that the home implements a proportionate approach to any risk assessment. (NMS 4.5).

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **outstanding**.

Children and young people are extremely happy to attend their short break. They are relaxed and familiar with the staff and their surroundings and understand the routines. They willingly accept some changes to their routine because they feel safe in their environment and know that they will always be asked to express their wishes about all aspects of their care and support.

Children and young people make excellent progress in communicating their needs. They use individualised methods of communication to express their wishes and make their feelings known. They utilise symbols that are accessible around the home to further enhance this, which develops their confidence knowing, that they will be understood.

Children and young people participate in a wide and interesting range of activities. Visits to the Harry Potter Studio, the seaside and football stadiums are chosen by children and young people. Visits and trips which are more complex for families and guardians to organise, are accessible ensuring that children and young people are not excluded from the wider community opportunities.

Children and young people receive a short break in a well equipped, warm and friendly environment. A homely setting supports the continuous progress children and young people make in developing independent and social skills. Where possible, children and young people prepare drinks and snacks, develop basic cleaning skills, learn to sit together at mealtimes and practice patience, sharing and taking turns during activities. These make the short break experiences calm and enriching for all

young people during their stay. One Parent said, 'my child has a number of targets, she has recently achieved sitting at the dinner table at home and eating her meal.'

All children and young people receive culturally appropriate care and support which is individualised and anti-discriminatory. For example, toileting preferences of children are respected as are routines prior to religious observation.

Quality of care

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

Staff demonstrate their skills in engaging children and young people in a positive, open and caring manner. This results in children and young people being confident that their needs are understood and will be met by the staff team. Staff use the daily arrival of children and young people to warmly welcome them, and organise the daily activity board. This lets young people know what they will be doing for the evening following the choices they make.

High quality care plans written by staff specifically for individual children and young people outline the objectives of the short break service. Staff are familiar with all children and young people's religious and cultural requirements as well as their personal preferences in relation to food, music, personal care. Information shared by other professionals such as teachers, and physiotherapists is incorporated into care plans to ensure a holistic approach is taken to help develop children and young people.

One school professional said, 'we have a good relationship with the home, there is good continuity of care and at least three of our staff work in the home. It is a positive experience for our pupils.'

Care plans are routinely reviewed to assess if the home is supporting children and young people's development in a variety of areas. Targets agreed with parents and carers include support with feeding, personal care and minimising challenging behaviour. Formal meetings evaluate the care plan and discuss the progress of set targets. If these are met, additional targets are set. This is to further develop the potential children and young people have to gain the skills required to lead more independent lives. One parent said, 'My child is encouraged to learn new life skills, for example, brushing his teeth. He is very well looked after,'

The views of children and young people are properly considered and acted upon during their stay. Children and young people prompted the introduction of a children's committee, facilitated by a member of staff. The committee is responsible for putting forward the views of the children and young people to improve service delivery. To date the committee has requested that the home extends the successful healthy eating agenda to include healthy lifestyles. Weekly gym nights have been established hosted by an external provider. This has proved to be a popular activity.

Facilities in the home such as the sensory room, interactive projector, arts and crafts and garden equipment are of a very high standard. These are utilised to interact,

engage and stimulate children and young people of all ages and abilities. Mobile sensory equipment allows children and young people unable to manage groups to also enjoy the benefits. One parent said.' they are friendly and approachable, very well trained and treat my son as if he were their own child. They love the children and make their time there as fun as possible. I trust them 100%.'

Arrangements for the administration of medication are safe and robust. Medication is monitored by a senior member of staff and regular external training and updates act as a reminder for staff about the importance of managing medication safely. There have not been any medication errors in over a year. At times, staff go over and above what is expected of them in relation to medication. For example, staff contact doctors and will collect prescriptions and medication from pharmacies or children and young people's homes to ensure the correct medication is available to them and the short break is not disrupted.

The home is well designed, extremely well maintained and kept clean by a dedicated and competent housekeeper. The area is spacious allowing for various activities to take place at the same time. This means young people are able to exercise real choice about what they do. Children and young people move freely around the building with staff and some seek to utilise quieter areas of the building.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people feel very safe during their short break. They enjoy positive relationships with the staff which increase their sense of safety and security. Incidents of bullying are very rare due to the high levels of staffing and the grouping of children and young people that use the service.

The home has a highly effective system in place to ensure that there is a manageable balance of children and young people with differing needs accessing short breaks at the same time. A traffic light system alerts staff to appropriate groupings whilst taking into account friendships that have been established. This ensures that they are all individually safeguarded according to their specific vulnerabilities, whilst getting the maximum benefit from their short break.

Activity risk assessments outline how the home will manage risks to individual children and young people appropriately; for example children suffering a seizure during an outing. The actions recorded demonstrate how such risks can be managed effectively whilst promoting the independence of children and young people. Additional behaviour risk assessments include other information irrelevant to the risks identified and the course of action the home will take. This makes confusing reading but does not detract from the strategy in place to manage behaviour.

Staff use their specialist disability training, team meetings and policies and procedures to effectively safeguard children and young people. Where relevant, staff

make use of body maps and report any concerns appropriately. Staff have an established professional network to call upon and share information. One social work team manager said, 'they are very clear about procedures they consult if they are unsure and always put information in writing.'

The home has facilitated safeguarding training for parents to help them to understand the home's role and what action will be taken if they have any concerns. Staff are very clear of their responsibility to report unacceptable practice and behaviour by their colleagues and fully recognise their duty towards the children and young people as the priority. The high levels of commitment to the children and young people mean that the staff team work effectively together and with parents and carers.

The home does not use any form of restraint with children and young people. Sanctions are rare, instead staff use their excellent skills of communication to understand children and young people's needs. Staff employ distraction and de-escalation techniques to manage potentially challenging situations. Staff support each other in managing behaviour and use the space around the home to ensure distress is not caused to other children and young people. As a result of staff expertise, the home remains a calm and safe place for children and young people to be. One parent said, 'our child's behaviour is really challenging, they manage her well, they like her and she likes them. It is a fantastic break for the family. It is a life-saver.'

Robust arrangements are in place for the selection and employment of staff. All visitors are checked and escorted to communal areas of the building. This ensures that young people's safety and privacy is not compromised.

The home completes all required health and safety checks. The attention to detail, for which the whole staff team takes responsibility, ensures that the building, fixtures and fittings are safe and secure, minimising the risk of accidents or injury.

Leadership and management

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

The leadership and management of the home is of an extremely high standard. The manager fully understands the service, its strengths and continuous areas of improvement. This is driven by a desire to provide the best service to children and young people and their families.

The home's Statement of Purpose gives the placing authority and parents and carers a good understanding of what kind of support is on offer. The home's children's guide is user friendly and easy to follow. It gives information that children and young people want to know.

The manager has high expectations of staff and they are keen to deliver the manager's vision and maintain the home's ethos. At the same time, they are able to confidently put forward suggestions to address the practicalities of service delivery.

Competing priorities are addressed through regular team meetings, and supervision. The staff and manager use team meetings to share information and evaluate their performance in delivering a service to children and young people. Supervision focuses on personal development within the staff team, monitoring of performance and the allocation of specific projects, for example, identifying additional outdoor activities, and preparing for cultural celebrations such as Christmas and Eid. Staff value the leadership provided by the manager and have expressed this openly.

The recommendation made at the interim inspection regarding appraisals for sessional staff has been met. This allows staff to be clear about their performance to date and set targets for the coming year.

Staff receive mandatory and specialist training to make certain that they are competent to manage particular duties. Staff receive training from other professionals such as nurses, within the school and hospital setting and are assessed on their competency level before they can carry out any specialised care. One parent said, 'staff are very friendly and helpful and take care of my child and maintain all aspects of his care needs including health and medical.' another said, 'I was very worried about allowing my son to go to the home and we could quite simply not cope without it. I could not praise the staff enough. My son totally loves going on is weekend breaks and as well as having fun with new friends he is learning important life skills. The staff are fantastic and well trained.'

The manager undertakes rigorous monthly monitoring and evaluation of the home. This monitoring looks critically at the performance of the service and whether it continues to meet the objectives as outlined in the statement of purpose. Short falls are identified and addressed swiftly. In addition the home is monitored by the local authority. This involves quarterly meetings, scrutinising case studies and the outcomes achieved. One commissioner said, 'we have no concerns, our interaction is always positive, they are very child-centred and offer a huge range of activities. I am satisfied they provide a good level of service,'

Monitoring of new projects instigated by the manager also takes place, such as the newly formed fathers group to help fathers become more involved in the issues that affect their children. This project also gives male carers an opportunity to share their experiences of parenting children with disabilities, become familiar with staff providing their care and increase their confidence in the service.

The manager identified the need for a new kitchen to ease congestion and remove the temptation for children and young people to be distracted by food items openly displayed. A strong business case focused on the positive outcomes for children and young people was successful in this case. Mealtimes are now calmer with a decrease in challenging behaviour triggered by access to food.

Monthly monitoring takes place on behalf of the Registered Manager and these reports cover all areas required by the Children's Homes Regulations and are sent promptly to Ofsted.

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.