

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Seka Graovac
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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.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: a service that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

Good: a service that exceeds minimum requirements

Satisfactory: a service that only meets minimum requirements

Inadequate: a service that does not meet minimum requirements

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 inner city 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 looking after eight children and young people at any time. Its stated mission is to reach the largest number of children with special needs and their families with the most warm, loving, dynamic and unique service. Children and young people come for weekend breaks term-time and longer stays during school holidays, on an agreed rolling basis. The same children and young people also attend an after-school activity club at the home. In addition to its children's services, the home also provides support for a group of minority ethnic mothers of children with disabilities.

Overall effectiveness

The overall effectiveness is judged to be **good**.

The home is effective at providing a child-centred service and promoting excellent outcomes for children and young people. The support provided to children and young people is individually tailored and flexibly shaped around their needs and choices. Children and young people love having short breaks in this home. Their parents are also very positive about the service. The relationships between the staff, children and young people are good. Children and young people trust staff and feel safe.

However, although the actual staff practice is of a high quality, the record keeping is not of the same standard. Weaknesses identified at the inspection resulted in three requirements being made. They include incomplete staff recruitment records. In the current culture of the home, the record keeping is seen as something separate from the practice. It is not proactively used to add value and to positively underpin the delivery of the service. As a result the home does not achieve full compliance with legislation.

Areas for improvementStatutory 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 home's Statement of Purpose contains all the matters as listed in Schedule 1 (Regulation 4.1 Schedule 1.4 and 1.17)	07/10/2011
17B (2001)	review and implement an updated written policy that ensures that within 24 hours of the use of any measure of control, restraint or discipline, a written record is made in a detail required (Regulation 17B)	07/10/2011
26 (2001)	ensure that the record of full and satisfactory information is available for each staff member, as listed in Schedule 2. (Regulation 26, Schedule 2.3 and 2.6)	07/10/2011

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Children and young people are delighted to have a short break at this home. They are enthusiastic about the service and eager to come more often. The home is a very happy place for them. They enjoy being with their friends in a clean, spacious and suitably equipped environment of a very high standard. They very much enjoy nutritious and freshly prepared food that meet their dietary needs including those relating to their religious background. They learn how to lead a healthy life style. They have excellent opportunities to strengthen their social skills and life skills. They enjoy spending stimulating time playing and relaxing with other children, young people and staff. They can choose from an extensive programme of exiting outings and purposeful activities in-house. They have access to the state-of-the-art gadgets, such as a sensory projector that runs a wealth of electronic programmes. The programmes turn any surface into a virtual space for children and young people to play in and learn about the world around them. Through additional tools, such as an 'omibeam' mobile projector even the most severely physically disabled children and young people are able to engage in virtual games created by this projector. These games facilitate their sensory learning and the development of kinetic intelligence.

Taking part in the exceptionally wide range of activities go a long way in helping children and young people to develop a positive self view and confidence. Trying out and experiencing new things also supports their learning very effectively. Children and young people benefit from having excellent opportunities to achieve their potential and full social integration through this service. The parents are very positive about the quality of the service. They know that their children have a good time when on a break at this home and return to their family home in a positive and happy mood.

Quality of care

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

The parents and their children express having confidence in the service. Children and

young people enjoy having positive relationships with staff and each other. Staff are skilled in communicating with children and young people with disabilities including those with communication difficulties. Staff are motivated and able to engage children and young people effectively. In addition to working closely with parents, staff actively seek and sensitively listen to children and young people's views, wishes and feelings. This ensures that the service is individually tailored.

Each child has a care plan that describes satisfactorily their needs including those arising from their cultural and/or religious background and how to meet those needs. In line with its Statement of Purpose (SOP), the service is mainly activity-based. However, staff are aware of children and young people's learning needs. Children and young people receive good learning support in line with their identified targets.

Staff work in close partnership with parents and health services to assist in a consistent promotion of children and young people's health while they are enjoying their break. Robust procedures for dealing with medication are in place. The home provides a healthy environment.

A clear procedure for raising and dealing with complaints is consistently implemented to protect children and young people and promote good practice.

The premises are well-designed and equipped to address the special needs of children and young people with disabilities. This includes excellent in-house physical resources, such as a sensory room and overhead trucking hoists in every room.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

A number of policies and procedures that aim to promote good safeguarding practice are in place. However, it is unclear how some of the written guidance is relevant to this service. The policy on behaviour management refers to a care practice advisor. Nobody is identified as having that role within the organisation or external partner agencies.

In addition, the policy on required record keeping in respect of physical interventions has not been updated in line with the amended Children Homes Regulations. Staff are not given an up-to-date written guidance on what records must be kept. The guidance does not cover recording of details of the child's behaviour leading to the use of the measure and details of any methods used to avoid the need to use that measure.

None of the parents who responded to the Ofsted survey knew what the rules of the home were and what would happen if they were broken. Some of them did not know what procedures staff would follow if they were concerned about a child's safety. However, parents are satisfied that their child's safety is given a high priority by the home.

Children and young people report feeling safe at the home. They report knowing what the rules are. They express being well looked after. The records and staff practice show that any risks to children and young people's safety are identified. Clear management strategies are written down to aid consistent staff support and welfare promotion. Children and young people receive appropriate support to behave in a constructive and positive manner. Physical interventions are rarely used and always for a good reason.

Children and young people enjoy being at this home. The incidence of children and young people going missing are very rare. When it happens, staff take appropriate actions to protect the missing child and respond positively on their return. The home works in close partnership with the social care and other partner services to protect children and young people from harm. Clear reporting procedures that secure effective protection are in place and are known to staff. Child protection is regularly discussed at the staff meetings. Body maps are completed for children and young persons who are under identified risk.

Good health and safety arrangements are in place to ensure that the physical environment remains safe. Appropriate security measures contribute to protection from unauthorised persons. However, the home's own staff recruitment procedure has some weaknesses. No record was kept of a two-year gap in employment on one of the staff files examined. The home accepts unsigned references and no record of telephone calls to validate references are kept. Records are kept of all other required checks that contribute to ensuring that only people suitable to work with children are given unsupervised access to them.

Leadership and management

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

The home is satisfactorily managed in line with its Statement of Purpose. This document contains clear and accurate information. However, details of the relevant qualifications and experience of the registered person are not provided. In addition, the arrangements to counter bullying are not included in the document. This means that the Statement of Purpose is not fully meeting the specifications of the Schedule 1 of The Children's Homes Regulations. The stakeholders do not receive full information about the service, as required.

The home is funded and resourced very well. The local authority continues to invest a significant amount of money to ensure that the physical environment is well equipped, stimulating and safe.

The staffing levels are kept under review and maintained consistently at a suitably high level. Staff are appropriately trained and have access to the extensive training programme through the funding authority. Those staff who do not have a relevant qualification are working towards obtaining it. Staff receive individual supervision and have their performance appraised annually. They report being very well supported.

Team meetings are regularly held. The team spirit is strong.

Staff are highly motivated to promote the best outcomes for children and young people irrespective of their disability, ethnicity, faith, gender, language, religious belief, sexual orientation or any other individual characteristic. Children and young people receive highly individualised support and care. The home is effective in addressing needs relating to children's cultural background and personal identity. Some staff have completed National Vocational Training at level 2 in the promotion of equality and diversity. The staff team is moderately diverse with the prevalence of the staff having an Asian background. This reflects well the ethnic composition of children and young people who use the service.

However, the manager has linked issues with the quality of record keeping with the fact that for many of the staff, English is an additional language rather than their mother tongue. However, while the quality of the record keeping is certainly not of the same very high standard as the actual staff care practice, the shortfalls identified in this report relate to the home's failure to fully meet particular regulations in terms of what records are available at the home or not .

At the last inspection that was conducted in December 2010, the quality of the service was rated overall as satisfactory. At that time, the management was asked to record risk assessments relating to the premises, each child and the activities they engage in. This has been done successfully. The management was also asked to keep a detailed record of any sanctions and physical interventions used. Some improvement has been achieved. The home can clearly demonstrate that this requirement has been acted upon.

The management and staff are aware of the new National Minimum Standards for Children's Homes and the amended Children's Home Regulations that came into force in April 2011. However, the service has not been reviewed in the light of the legislative changes. The current development plan does not take into account the changes that have to be made to bring the home's procedures in line with the current legislation.

The recommendations given at the previous inspections were in respect of improving record keeping in relation to accidents and young people's transition into adulthood. Significant improvements have been achieved in both areas.

The management of the home acts when under the pressure from the regulator. However, they do not demonstrate taking proactive steps to ensure that the home is run within the clear legislative framework. The home has a capacity to improve, but the improvement is guided by the outside influence.

Clear monitoring processes are in place to ensure the quality of the service. The responsible individual visits the service on a monthly basis on behalf of the registered provider to check on the welfare of children and the conduct of the home. The funding authority also keeps a close eye on the quality of the service. The Registered Manager is highly motivated to continue to improve the service and to engage staff

in this process. The home is very much children-centred and contributes effectively to achieving the best outcomes for them. However the shortfalls in the record keeping have the potential to undermine the quality of the care.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.