

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC422464
Inspection date	18/12/2013
Inspector	Michael McCleave
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	26/03/2013
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home, is run by a local authority provides accommodation for up to 10 children with complex care needs arising from profound and multiple learning disabilities, autism and other associated health needs. The home provides a short-breaks service.

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**.

The manager of this home provides strong leadership coupled with a positive approach for continuing improvement in care practices. The staff team take pride in their work with the children. Since the last inspection the home has clearly demonstrated a capacity for continual improvement in the way operational practices are carried out.

In order to ensure consistency and high standards staff receive appropriate supervision and management oversight. The manager is clear about the strengths and areas for development at the centre. The day-to-day operations are regularly monitored by the management team and external oversight through monthly inspections. However, some records do not have all the appropriate information. For example, in the Children's Guide and restraint log. The manager is positively committed to improving the operations of the service and has taken steps to rectify these shortfalls. There is no impact on the high quality care provided to the children as a result of these deficits.

A strong feature of the home is the positive commitment of the staff team to continually develop their skills and competences. Training and the development of staff is given a high priority and this ensures they are kept up-to-date with professional practice information. The low staff turnover is a reflection of the stability of the staff team and this provides the children with a consistent level of care.

The children have developed a trust and respect for the staff. Behaviour management is based on de-escalation. Restraint is only used when the behaviour of

a child is detrimental to the safety of the other children or to themselves.

The home is well maintained and the children have been busy making the home look festive for the Christmas celebrations.

The children have their health and educational care needs well met at the centre. Although they only stay for a short break, staff nevertheless work proactively to support and encourage them to enjoy a healthy lifestyle and to continue with their education. A positive strength at the centre is the close professional links between the staff and the schools. Staff are determined that children benefit from their education.

Safeguarding is afforded a high priority by the manager and staff. Children are kept safe at the centre through the thorough checks carried out on all fire and safety equipment. The manager has developed good professional links with the safeguarding service of the local authority.

The commitment to equality, diversity is a strong feature. The involvement of the children in planning activities, visits and deciding on Christmas decorations is an example of this. Disability is not regarded as limitation. The centre maintains an extensive range of information relating to cultural, religious and disability considerations.

This is a very positive environment for children who are supported and encouraged to achieve their potential with excellent support and guidance from a team of dedicated staff.

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 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 nurse or medical practitioner (NMS 3.16)
- ensure the Children's Guide includes how a child can contact their reviewing officer and how to access an independent advocate (NMS13.5)
- ensure the manager regularly monitors in line with regulations all the records kept by the home, in particular that all records are signed by the person making the entry. (NMS 21.1)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

The children achieve significant outcomes at this short breaks centre. They make exceptional progress due to the positive support and encouragement they receive from the staff. There is an enthusiasm among staff to ensure that each child, irrespective of their disability, achieves their potential in line with their abilities. This is a clear example of a commitment to equality and diversity.

Children learn how to socialise with other children and they form strong friendships. Many of the children have few friends outside the centre and they lead protected sheltered lives with their parents and carers. The warm interaction between the children helps them to learn how to communicate with each other and to learn social interaction skills. This will become increasingly important as they become older and become more independent from their parents and carers. For example one carer said, 'we have seen a remarkable change in our foster child since he went to the centre, he has become more confident and made some strong friendships with the other children.'

The children learn how to take care of some areas of their personal health. For example, eating healthy meals, taking exercise through walks in the park and to engage in physical activities. For some children this is a new experience. None of the children engage in substance misuse or smoke.

The children become more confident in their abilities as a result of their time at the centre. They learn how to carry out self-care tasks such as washing themselves, brushing their teeth and taking care of aspects of personal hygiene. This is invaluable experience for the children and will be of benefit to them as they become more confident in their abilities.

All the children attend school and they have an excellent attendance record. They are all achieving educationally and staff are active in supporting the children to achieve their academic potential.

The centre has established an excellent partnership with the schools attended by the children. There is a continual dialogue and sharing of information based on mutual trust and respect. This approach positively promotes the educational as well as social achievements of the children.

The children learn how to enjoy being part of the local community. They actively support local events such as festivities in the park. They go shopping and visits to places of interest. The emphasis on ensuring that the children are exposed to life outside the safe confines of the centre is part of the programme of developing their confidence. The children's disabilities are not regarded as a barrier to enjoying new experiences. The staff support them to achieve their maximum potential and to make informed choices. The social and emotional benefits for the children are clearly evident. For some children, going to the cinema or to a shop has not been something they have previously experienced. They enjoy these experiences and this has helped parents to be more confident when taking their children out into the community. There is a positive focus on encouraging the children to achieve their potential in whatever form that might be. As pointed out by a parent, 'I cannot sing the praises enough for what the staff here have done for my child, he has come on in leaps and

bounds since coming to the centre.'

Quality of care

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

The care provided for the children who attend the short breaks centre is excellent.

The children enjoy very positive relationships with the staff some of whom said, 'we have a warm relationship with all the children' and 'they hopefully trust us as do their parents with their care.' Children said, 'I love the staff they are kind just like my mum,' 'I like seeing my friends I don't have any friends at home' and 'I love my bedroom here.'

There is a calm friendly atmosphere where staff and children interact well. Behaviour management is based on trust and de-escalation of tense or difficult situations. Full restraint techniques are rarely required. Staff pride themselves on the expertise they have developed in communicating with the children. Some staff have recently trained in Makaton thereby increasing the tools available to enable effective communication to take place with the children. The range of communication methods used at the centre is excellent and staff are continually seeking to improve the resources at the centre. The use of pictures and symbols to convey information to the children is extensively used around the building. These include information about activities, menus, how to make a complaint and cultural and religious information as appropriate. This reflects a positive approach to equality and diversity. The staff are proactive and imaginative in discovering new ways to ensure the quality of care and experiences of the children is enhanced.

The children are encouraged to take an active part in the life of the short breaks centre. Their views are sought regularly at children's meetings, during weekends and evenings. In addition the centre produces a newsletter where the children are encouraged to submit their views on any matter. This promotes their active involvement in the life of the centre.

The high quality of care provided is enhanced through the positive links staff have established with health care professionals. Training for staff in medicines administration and in the use of specialist equipment, is provided by qualified professionals. This ensures that the children live in a healthy environment. This is additionally promoted through the provision of healthy meals and staff have an awareness of the specialist diets of individual children.

Staff are enthusiastic in supporting the children to value their education. They are active in engaging with teachers and this is demonstrated when staff go up to the school to support a child. This positive approach working in partnership with the school and parents has enabled the children to benefit from the richness of the education provided. The strong links established between the centre and the school ensures that the children are given the best possible chances to achieve educationally.

The building is a comfortably furnished throughout providing the children with a very comfortable environment to enjoy their short breaks. Children stay in single bedrooms that are decorated and appropriately equipped to meet their sensory needs. There are two lounges where the children can relax and socialise. All bathrooms are suitably equipped to meet the disability needs of the children. Extensive information is depicted throughout the building giving children colourful information about a wide range of topics. This includes information about activities, the date, weather, menus and activities. The play area has been transformed to a Christmas theme with decorations, pictures and art work. This positively promotes their awareness and understanding of daily life.

The comfortable surroundings combined with the excellent care provided by staff enable the children to develop to their potential in a positive environment. Staff place the wellbeing of the children at the focus of their work. Parents and carers are fulsome in their praise for the staff and the facilities at the centre. For example some said, 'I cannot fault the high quality of care they give to my child it is fantastic and he loves coming here.' 'The staff here are angels they really love the children and it shows, my son always looks forward to his breaks,' and 'he is so excited as we pack his overnight bag.' Other parents and carers said, 'the staff are stars they cannot do enough for the children' and 'the quality of the care is outstanding I trust the staff one hundred per cent to care for my boy I know he is well cared for.'

Staff consistently aim high for the children. They do not regard disability as a limitation for children achieving their potential both socially and educationally. This service provides the children with a fun environment where they learn how to socialise and to enjoy their time as children.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

The short breaks centre is a safe environment for the children. Their care plans contain appropriate information to enable staff to assess the risk situations relevant to each child. These are regularly monitored with parents to ensure that the assessments are up-to-date and relevant as behaviour changes. Children are protected and kept safe by robust safeguarding procedures and practices. Positive behaviour is promoted through de-escalation and the use of gentle persuasion by guiding a young person away from tense or confrontational situations. This approach is based on staff having a close trusting relationship with the children. This promotes the safety and wellbeing of the children. Restraint is rarely used and this generally comprises of staff guiding the children away from a situation of tension with another child. When any form of restraint is used a member of staff will complete a body map to indicate if any medical assistance is required. The restraint log does not have a section to record this action. Steps have been taken by the manager to amend the log to include this information. It is rare for children to go missing from the centre due to appropriate staffing levels. There is nevertheless, a missing person's procedure in place that staff are familiar with.

Staff are alert to any aggressive behaviour between the children. Such occasions are dealt with sensitively by gently guiding the children away from each other. This works well and ensures that the children concerned are not alarmed by sudden actions from staff.

The safety and well-being of the children is enhanced by the robust recruitment and selection procedures in place. Staff are appointed following a rigorous procedure that includes criminal records checks, interview, and a probationary period. This process is intended to prevent unsuitable adults from working with the children. Staff demonstrate a sound understanding of their child protection responsibilities and all have been appropriately trained in safeguarding. A recent safeguarding situation was managed appropriately in line with safeguarding procedures.

The centre ensures the safety of the children with full fire safety and environmental checks carried out in line with regulations.

Leadership and management

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

This is a very well managed service. There is a culture of continual improvement and a commitment to ensure that the children receive high quality care from trained and motivated staff. The recommendations made at the last inspection relating to improving the activities for children and to ensure that all areas are accessible to the children have been met.

Staff maintain their essential skills through training opportunities provided by the local authority. This ensures that the children are provided with high quality care from dedicated skilled staff. Staff development is complemented through formal monthly supervision from a manager. The quality of work is regularly monitored by the manager and any shortfalls in standards are addressed through supervision meetings.

The Statement of Purpose describes the services available and staff have a clear understanding of their responsibilities. However, the Children's Guide, does not include details about how to contact the reviewing officer and the independent advocate. This limits the children's ability to make contact with these professionals if they have a concern. Steps have been taken by the manager to ensure this information is included in the guide.

The manager has a clear vision on the future development of the service. This is complemented by regular external monitoring in line with the regulations, which ensures additional oversight of the operations at both units. Records are kept in secure conditions ensuring that only those authorised, have access to the children's case files. The oversight monitoring of case records however, demonstrate a shortfall. Some records do not identify the author. This does not impact directly on the care of the children. The manager intends to review all monitoring systems in

order to improve the overview of all records.

The manager is positive about continuing to improve the service provided at the short breaks centre.

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.