

## Inspection report for children's home

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<b>Inspector</b>	Rosemary Chapman
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<b>Provision subtype</b>	Children's home

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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

The home is run by the local authority. It provides short breaks for no more than eight children and young people at any one time, aged over four years and who have a learning disability.

The home is near the centre of the village, close to shops, parks and local amenities. It has a dining room, lounge, sensory area and quiet area, as well as office space. All bedrooms are single and bathrooms are equipped to meet the personal care needs of the children and young people. There is a secure garden equipped with appropriate facilities, including a climbing frame, swings, a bouncy slide and cycles.

### Overall effectiveness

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

Children really enjoy coming to this home for their short break. They have excellent relationships with staff, who demonstrate an outstanding level of knowledge about the children's needs. This knowledge enables behaviour to be managed very well and for children to have care and support to meet all their identified needs and help them progress. Parents comment on the flexibility of the home and the excellent relationships they have with staff, calling them 'brilliant' and 'fantastic'. One parent said: 'It's about as perfect as it gets.'

Children make very good progress in all aspects of their lives as the home works in close partnership with the parents, schools and other agencies to deliver consistent support. Staff can work flexibly to support parents at home when this has been identified as a need, providing a good and effective continuum of care.

Children are safe and happy. Staff provide an excellent level of supervision and have a very good knowledge of safeguarding issues. Risk is assessed and managed very well and the environment is very safe and secure.

The home is extremely well managed and staff receive an excellent level of support, supervision and training to enable them to provide outstanding support and care to the children. Staff are committed and bring a variety of complementary skills to the home, for the benefit of the children. The management team is proactive in addressing shortfalls and innovative in the way the service is being developed to provide outreach, and support with transition to adult services. No shortfalls were identified at this inspection.

## Outcomes for children and young people

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

Children receive a high level of individual support to meet their needs. They are clearly seen as individuals with many and varying needs and interests. Such individualised care enables children to feel secure and confident and reach their full potential.

Staff at the home work extremely well in partnership with parents and other agencies to ensure children and young people's needs in relation to health and education are fully supported. Although health and education remain the responsibility of parents, staff attend all reviews and contribute fully and effectively. As a result, there is comprehensive information about a child to inform future planning. A social worker confirmed that children make good progress educationally. Staff have also worked very effectively, both through outreach and in the home, to improve children's behaviour. A social worker commented that this had been effective in making one particular young person calmer at home. A parent commented that he had seen improvements in his child attributable to the support from the home. These included bedtime routines, help with household chores, tolerance of other people and a willingness to try new foods.

Children participate fully in the community and access a full range of opportunities which they enjoy so they can achieve their full potential. It is very evident that staff do not take easy options and never use disability as an excuse; for example, children are taken to the park to play games which they could play in the garden. This shows a commitment to ensuring children are part of the community. Children express their wishes and feelings using a variety of communication methods and staff act on these views wherever possible. Effective communication is given a very high priority.

The manager has recently identified transition to adult services as an area for development and the home has made very good progress with this already. They are in contact with the adult services team to make them aware that they will visit new facilities with the young person. This will enable them to provide full information and be involved in introductions to ensure the young person moves on smoothly. A worker from adult services confirmed that the home is very helpful in giving information, attending reviews and working in partnership with them for the benefit of the young person. If a young person moves to another home within the local authority, staff go with them and work shifts there to enable the young person to settle in.

Children make small but significant steps in a variety of ways through imaginative support. For example, one young person has been assisted to become more independent with brushing teeth through key-working sessions using a model of a giant set of teeth. Staff also use social stories so that children understand how to manage certain behaviours and that this is dealt with consistently at home and school. For example, a young person is given guidance about what to do when waking up early or behaving in a safe way when in the community.

## Quality of care

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

Children have excellent relationships with staff. Staff know the children very well and know how to pre-empt any incidents. For example, if young people find it hard to transfer from one activity to another, they have a countdown system to prepare the young person for a smooth transition. Staff are also aware if a young person needs distracting and take appropriate action. As a result, children's behaviour is managed very well.

Staff use a variety of communication methods to ensure the views of young people are gained and they are able to contribute to the planning of their time at the home. This is facilitated by the use of signs and symbols which are available throughout the home. All staff are able to use a signing system and work proactively with schools and parents to ensure communication methods are consistent. Children contribute their views through young people's meetings and through individual and informal communication with staff. They have recently requested a punch bag, for example.

Children know how to make a complaint because the procedure is displayed in symbolic form and in their children's guide. An advocacy service visits every month as a further way of encouraging young people to speak out to an independent person if necessary. Their parents are similarly made aware of how to complain on behalf of their child. Complaints are used to improve practice; however they are few in number. Parents are in very regular contact with the home, when they bring and pick up their children from their short break, and any issues are usually raised during these contacts. The home receives a number of compliments about the care they provide. For example one parent said: 'I don't know where we would have been without you.'

Children are cared for in a very individual way which meets their identified needs. All needs, including those relating to race, culture and religion, are highlighted in a residential action plan with very clear details of how these needs are to be met. Parents are initially involved in discussing their child's needs in a fact-finding meeting then they contribute to regular updates to ensure the plan is up to date and relevant. Parents are extremely happy with the way the home meets the children's needs and one commented: 'I trust the staff implicitly'.

Children live in an environment which meets their health needs very well. The staff work in partnership with parents, who retain the primary responsibility for the children's health care. All health needs are highlighted in the child's plan and staff have extra training if the needs are complex, for example, in relation to epilepsy. The staff are guided by very robust procedures which address how to deal with accidents and injuries, staff are trained in first aid and there are good relationships with primary health care services, who are consulted for advice. Children eat a healthy diet and are encouraged to eat fruit and vegetables, pictures of which are on display in the dining room. Special dietary needs are catered for, for example, softer food, and cultural and religious dietary needs are met. They are also encouraged to take part in physical activity. They go to the local park, attend a disability sports centre and local leisure centres, and utilise the extensive grounds.

Staff work in very close and effective partnership to ensure children's educational

needs are met. Again, parents retain the primary responsibility for this but there is excellent communication between the home and the schools, and staff attend and contribute to educational reviews.

Young people have access to a wide range of activities, all of which meet their individual needs and interests. The home has a number of facilities, both indoor and outdoor, including a sensory room, televisions, computers, electronic and board games, a large outdoor bouncy slide, swings and plenty of space. However, young people also use community facilities to promote their integration. For example, young people go to the park to play games, go to the cinema, the airport and cafes in the village. This gives young people the opportunity to take part in activities they may not do at home. All activities are well planned as part of the shift, with staff allocated to ensure the activities take place. Children's disabilities are never seen as a reason to limit their opportunities for involvement and participation.

The home is located in a large village and is appropriately secure, maintained to a reasonable standard and, despite it being an old building, offers appropriate facilities.

### **Safeguarding children and young people**

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



Children are safe in this home. Their evident enjoyment, both observed and reported, when coming for their short breaks indicates that they feel safe and happy. Staff are very good at highlighting any potential risks and clearly determine, through thorough written risk assessments, how the risks are going to be managed and thus minimised. These risk assessments are regularly updated in response to new information or incidents, and staff are kept informed of any updates so they can respond appropriately and protect children.

Incidents where children go missing from this home are very infrequent, due to the close supervision from staff. Staff are very aware of the children's vulnerabilities and are very clear about what action to take should such an incident occur, which include good protocols with the police. Likewise, incidents of bullying are rare, again due to the very close supervision by staff, good placement planning and excellent knowledge of children's needs and vulnerabilities.

Staff know how to respond to any incidents of a safeguarding nature. The procedures are readily available and staff have training, which is regularly updated. These measures ensure that children are protected in the event of an allegation. Staff are aware if any child is subject to a child protection plan and work in effective partnership with the child's social worker to ensure the child's protection.

Children exhibit a variety of behaviour due to their differing disabilities. Staff are very aware of these and have very clear behaviour management plans to address negative behaviour. They are aware of triggers, how to respond appropriately and the written and up-to-date plans ensure a consistency of response. Sanctions and incidents of restraint are few in number, appropriately recorded, very thoroughly monitored and only used as a last resort. Staff are trained in a recognised method of physical intervention but the emphasis is on prevention and distraction to minimise incidents; the small number of these indicates the success of this method. Children are encouraged to behave positively through encouragement and rewards.

Children live in a very safe environment. All risks are thoroughly assessed and minimised, all equipment is checked at the appropriate regularity and fire safety measures are thorough.

Children benefit from being cared for by an appropriately trained, committed and stable staff team. No new staff have been appointed since the last inspection but there are robust procedures to ensure only staff who are suitable to work with children are employed. This has been improved since the previous inspection when a shortfall was highlighted, which has now been addressed. All visitors sign the visitors' book, have their identity checked and are monitored while on the premises to ensure children are protected.

## **Leadership and management**

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

The home is extremely well managed, leading to excellent outcomes for children and young people. The manager has satisfactorily addressed the action and three recommendations from the previous inspection. This has resulted in considerable improvements in the home's response to accidents and thus children's well-being is further promoted. Improved recording in relation to complaints, restraints, sanctions and staff recruitment means that monitoring can be more effective.

The manager is very keen to continue to improve and develop the service for the benefit of the children using it. For example, she is currently developing outreach and more effective relationships with adult services to improve transitions. These are both areas which the management team highlighted as shortfalls, and which have already had a positive impact on the lives of the children. The manager has been able to address these developments through excellent planning and a flexible use of current resources.

The aims and objectives of the service are clearly detailed in the Statement of Purpose, which has recently been amended to reflect the new standards, guidance and regulations. A version of this is in symbol form to ensure children using the service are clear about what they can expect to receive.

Monitoring arrangements are very effective. Significant events are notified promptly and dealt with appropriately to improve practice where possible. The Regulation 33 visits are thorough and include observations of and where possible comments from children. The manager monitors the quality of care through her Regulation 34 reports but also on an ongoing basis through supervision. This also includes involvement with children and young people, and contact with their parents, carers, other agencies. This monitoring is used to inform the development of the home. A new build has recently been approved by the council and plans are currently underway to pursue this. This has confirmed the security and continuation of the service.

Staffing levels are very good, including management cover at all times. This ensures children are appropriately supervised and their needs are met. Staff are very well trained. They commented that the manager is 'very good at putting you forward for training' and there is 'loads of training'. The training is very relevant for the needs of the children who come for short breaks. Staff are also well supported by regular supervision of a high quality. This ensures they can reflect on their practice and develop their skills and abilities to provide a service of very high quality. Staff are very enthusiastic about working at this home and have very high expectations of themselves and the support they give to young people to improve their outcomes. They are extremely committed and caring, often going above and beyond what is expected of them. They are enabled to contribute their views through regular team meetings, and feel confident they will be listened to.

The majority of the records are maintained electronically and are used by district social workers as well as the home's staff. This means that everyone concerned with the child can see and contribute to what is happening without delay, and form a full picture of the child's life. The residential action plan and risk assessments are also in

hard copy form so they can be accessed quickly. These are stored with appropriate security.

Equality and diversity practice is **outstanding**.