

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Michael McCleave
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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 children's resource unit is operated by a local authority. It provides respite short breaks for up to 9 children with learning disabilities and complex health care needs, and for children who have autism. The service is provided from two sites. The bedrooms in both units are all single occupancy and are equipped with modern appliances to assist in moving and handling. The enclosed gardens lead to a safe secure play area. Both units have sensory rooms.

Overall effectiveness

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

The manager provides strong leadership and direction. There is a clear understanding of the strengths and areas for development at this unit. The children make good progress during their short stays and they benefit from the dedication and commitment of experienced staff.

The children are provided with a very high level of care and they clearly enjoy being with other children who also attend for short breaks. It is evident that this service provides a positive input into the overall care of the children and it is valued by parents. There are very warm and positive relationships between the children and the staff.

A recommendation is made relating to updating the children's guide, so young people have information on how to contact the children's rights director.

The staff demonstrate a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities to keep the children safe and to ensure a safe working environment.

Equality and diversity is a strong feature at this setting. There is a positive respect for cultural differences and the children are encouraged to appreciate aspects of life from other countries. The children live in a lively unit that does not regard disability as a limitation. They are actively supported and encouraged to achieve their potential.

Staff are committed to the aims of the unit and demonstrate a dedication to high standards of care.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- update the children's guide to remove details of the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI); and include information about how children can contact the Children's Rights Director if they wish to raise a concern. (NMS 13.5)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

The children are supported and encouraged to develop their self confidence and to learn daily personal skills as an integral part of their care plan. Staff demonstrate an active interest in promoting positive outcomes for the children both educationally and in health matters. Parents welcome the support of the staff and it is clear that the children benefit from their experience at the unit. Children enjoy their stay and positive friendships have been developed among the children.

The strong links established with the education and health care professionals ensures that the children benefit from a consistent level of service. Within education, the children are supported to do well and to achieve positive outcomes. All the children attend their local school and staff work closely with parents and the teachers to ensure the children make good progress.

The social and emotional benefits for the children is clearly evident. For some children, going to the cinema or to a restaurant has not been something they have previously experienced. Staff have taken children to these venues with successful outcomes. 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.

Quality of care

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

The children enjoy excellent relationships with the staff. There is a calm friendly atmosphere and children are very well cared for. Staff are able to communicate with the children using a variety of techniques ensuring that their views are heard. This is a strong feature of the service. There is an expectation that all staff will become proficient in a range of communication methods. The unit intends that no child will be unable to communicate their views and feelings. This is an excellent approach to equality and diversity.

The care and attention shown by staff towards the children is impressive, demonstrating warmth and commitment to their wellbeing.

The responsibility for the health care needs of the children remain with their parents. However, the service takes an active role in partnership with parents to ensure that all health related needs are met during the short stay breaks at the unit. Staff have established excellent links with the disability health and occupational therapy services. Individual care plans are in place and these inform staff on their work with the children to achieve the aims and objectives listed. The plans are realistic and are aimed at teaching the children how to learn practical personal skills. Similar strong links have been established with the schools attended by the children. Staff working with parents ensure that communication with teachers is a three way partnership. Where required, staff attend meetings at the school to support parents. Staff take a proactive approach to enhance the lives of the children in a meaningful way. These positive relationships promote the health and education of the children. Although the children only have short breaks at the unit, it is clear that every effort is made to enrich their experience during their stay.

Children enjoy a range of purposeful activities. These range from, trips out to places of interest, walks in the countryside, shopping, play, going to the cinema and meals out. These are intended to enable the children to experience life out in the community and to socialise as a group. Disability is not regarded as a limitation to the children enjoying themselves. As pointed out by a parent, 'this is an absolutely invaluable service, I couldn't do without it, the staff are wonderful and the short break gives me a chance to recharge my energies.'

The two units provide the children with a safe stimulating environment. All doors leading out of both units have modern locks fitted a standard. Garden areas are surrounded by safe fencing.

The children are encouraged to learn about other cultures. This is supported through the display of pictures depicting national dress and religious celebrations. The walls are covered with pictures and symbols giving a range of messages and meanings to individual items around the unit. Communicating with the children in a mode that they understand is a positive feature of the service.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

There are good systems in place to ensure the safety of the children. Staff are appropriately trained in safeguarding and they are fully aware of the procedures to follow. Should a child go missing from the unit, there are robust procedures and risk assessments in place to guide staff on the actions to follow. The high staff ratio to children ensures good levels of supervision and promotes the safety of the children. The behaviour of the children is good. This is down to the positive culture prevailing at the unit, with an emphasis on respect and the establishment of good relationships between staff and children. Although staff are trained in physical restraint, this is rarely used. Staff base their approach to behaviour management on de-escalation of tense situations through calm dialogue with the children. Staff are very clear that

restraint is a last resort in order to prevent harm to the children.

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 Bureau (CRB) 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. There have been no safeguarding incidents since the last inspection.

Both units are safe environments that have appropriate safety features in place. All electrical, gas and domestic appliances have been appropriately checked by contractors. The safety of the children is enhanced through the rigorous fire safety checks carried out including full evacuation procedures that are practiced at required intervals.

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 prevailing, generated by the manager, of continual improvement and that ensures that the children receive high quality care from trained and motivated staff. The satellite unit offers short breaks to children with autism, whilst those children with learning disabilities and complex health needs are cared for at the main site. Staff maintain their essential skills by working across both units. This ensures that through flexible working, the children are provided with high quality care from dedicated skilled staff.

The Statement of Purpose describes the services available and staff have a clear understanding of their responsibilities. However, the children's guide requires updating to include details about how to contact Ofsted and the Children's Rights Director. The children's guide continues to refer to The Commission for Social Care Inspection. This organisation no longer exists.

Training opportunities are available for staff to enhance their skills. Communicating with children who have learning disabilities is mandatory. 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. This ensures that any shortfalls are addressed and necessary improvements made to promote the quality of care for the children.

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 manager is clear about the areas requiring development in order to improve this service.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.