

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Tola Akinde-Hummel
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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 local authority home provides care and accommodation for seven children at any one time. Three beds are for long stay and four provide short breaks for children with a learning disability.

Overall effectiveness

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

This home is a good provision for children and young people receiving a short break and permanent support. Children and young people are happy and settled in the home. This is due to the efforts made by the staff to create a fun yet peaceful environment.

Children and young people have adapted to the changes made to the service because of good planning and regular information sharing.

The home offers children and young people a safe and stimulating environment. One parent said, 'My child can relax when he is there, staff understand what my child needs and how he communicates, it is very different in the outside world.'

Staff enjoy working with children and young people and this is evident in the relationships that have built up over time. The manager and deputies encourage the contributions of staff members to develop the service. Relationships with other professionals are positive and collaborative working is a key strength of the home.

The home is required to update the Statement of Purpose and children's guide, review the information in care plans, update medication training and ensure that Regulation 33 reports are forwarded to Ofsted. The recommendation is for the home to demonstrate for children and young people how their opinions, wishes and feelings have been taken into account.

Areas for improvement

Statutory 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	include in the Statement of Purpose all matters listed in	30/01/2012

(2001)	Schedule 1, in particular the procedure for dealing with any incident where a child goes missing from the children's home (Regulation 4 (1) Schedule 1 (18))	
4 (2001)	shall produce a guide to the children's home which shall include a summary of the Statement of Purpose, a summary of the complaints procedure and the address and telephone number of HMCI (Regulation 4 (3))	30/01/2012
12 (2001)	shall keep under review and revise the placement plan as necessary (Regulation 12 (2))	30/12/2011
27 (2001)	ensure that all persons employed receive appropriate training, supervision and appraisal with specific reference to medication training (Regulation 27 (4) (a))	29/02/2012
33 (2001)	shall supply a copy of the Regulation 33 report to Ofsted at least once a month. (Regulation 33 (5)(a))	30/12/2011

Recommendations

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

- ensure that children understand that their views, wishes and feelings are taken into account and where significant wishes or concerns are not acted upon they are helped to understand why. (NMS 1.2)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Children and young people receive good support from a staff team that understands their physical, psychological and emotional health needs. The young people in 'long stay' previously used the short break service and staff are adapting to meet their needs on a longer term basis. One parent stated, 'I know my child is happy there. If we did not have this service I would not manage.'

Staff promote healthy lifestyles by providing nutritious meals and encouraging young people to take exercise. The home has a large secure garden available for children and young people to use. The home also has a minibus to help access activities in the community. Children and young people make choices about hobbies and interests and are supported to pursue this.

Children and young people have good attendance at school and relationships between the school and the home are positive. One head teacher said, 'We have a good working relationship with the school and parental feedback indicates that they rate the service very highly. They attend school reviews and social events.' Communication books are also used to ensure a good flow of information between school, home and the short breaks service. Contact between the home and schools with the 'longer stay' young people happens on a more frequent basis.

Contact between parents and carers of children and young people is encouraged. Those parents and carers whose children receive a short break are welcome to make telephone contact to reassure them that their loved ones are settled. Permanent residents maintain telephone and face to face contact with their families. This is sometimes facilitated by staff in the community and relatives are welcomed into the home. One parent said, 'The time I have with my child is a really positive experience now. We can go out with the support of staff.'

Children and young people in both parts of the service are supported to prepare for transition to adult services. This is done in a sensitive way through consultation and a positive attitude towards moving on. For the longer stays, independence books are available to demonstrate what tasks young people are undertaking to promote their independence. Celebrations, a pictorial record of their time in the home and leaving gifts mark the end of their relationship with the service.

Quality of care

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

Relationships between children and young people and staff are good. Although the home has a large staff team, the ethos of the home encourages positive engagement and respect for individuals. One parent said, 'My child is happy to go there, it is like a treat to stay there.' Observations of children and young people with staff show that relaxed and trusting relationships have developed over time.

The views of children and young people are embraced by staff. Two sets of children's meetings take place to differentiate between the needs of short breaks and permanent placements. Staff ensure children and young people have the opportunity to discuss issues that affect them. Records show that discussions range from menus to intimate relationships and bullying. The home has an independent advocate available to the children and young people who provides additional opportunities for children and young people to express their opinion about the service. In addition children and young people have pictorial leaflets to convey their opinions about the service. These are monitored by the manager but evidence of the response to some of the requests made by children and young people is limited.

Care plans are in place for all children and young people. These give information about their needs including health, leisure, mobility and communication. The plans lack information in relation to morning routines. This means that care and support at this time may not be individualised due to a lack of written information and guidance. This is particularly relevant for those children and young people who use non verbal communication.

Behaviour management plans enable children and young people to be appropriately supported by staff. These plans are updated as and when necessary and staff are expected to read and sign these. Records of sanctions demonstrate that their use is minimal and used only as a last resort. Thorough, in-depth discussions take place

between staff and outside professionals to help understand children and young people's behaviour.

Children and young people have plenty of space around the home and in the garden to explore and enjoy. There is a variety of equipment and materials available to keep them entertained. The short breaks service and the long stay provision are separated by a connecting door. This means that the changing atmosphere of the short breaks service does not impact on the homely, calm nature created for young people staying permanently.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Children and young people feel extremely safe in the home. A number of parents confirmed this as a reason why they are happy to send their children there. One parent added, 'I know they are safe, probably more so than home because of the staff ratio. I never doubt their safety there.'

Parents know that any situations that occur in the home will be reported to them without delay. In some instances this will result in a change in the home's practice to strengthen the safeguarding of children and young people. For example, the security in the home changed from keypads following a young person's ability to memorise numbers.

Accurate and detailed risk assessments are in place for all children and young people. The home works flexibly and creatively to minimise risk while allowing children and young people to grow and develop. To ensure risks are understood, the home seeks advice from specialists and implements their recommendations. One health professional stated, 'The home is a benchmark if young people move anywhere else. I have seen a change in behaviour and this is due to their approach. I have no cause for concern.'

The quarterly allocation of short breaks enables staff to plan which children and young people get on well together and where there is a possibility that friendships could develop. This process is assisted by parents and carers who advise the home which friendships are established. This reduces the risk of tension and bullying amongst children and young people during a short break. One parent said, 'I am very happy with the service, my child can make friends and socialise, it is like a second home to him.'

Children and young people do not go missing from the home. This is due to the security within the building that takes account of their vulnerability and the high staff ratios in place. Highly effective safety measures are in operation when children and young people access the community ensuring children and young people, staff and the public are safe.

Children and young people can be confident that any physical intervention used is to minimise any risk to themselves or others. These interventions include leading children and young people to a quiet space in order for them to calm down. Staff are trained in de-escalation techniques and will always use these first. The number of children who have been involved in a physical intervention is very small. One social worker stated, 'The home has decreased the stress and violence and adapted the environment to support their needs.'

Staff receive regular training on child protection, and are up to date with specific safeguarding issues that affect the children and young people they look after. Recruitment and vetting procedures ensure that children and young people are looked after only by those who can provide them with safe care.

Children and young people stay in a home that has been thoughtfully adapted to meet the changing needs of the children and young people there. One parent said, 'They are brilliant, they have made so many adaptations specific to the young person's needs.' All bedrooms are comfortably furnished and communal areas are spacious and welcoming.

Leadership and management

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

Young people live and receive short breaks in a home where their safety, welfare and happiness are central to the home's aims and objectives. The Statement of Purpose reflects this but additional information in relation to the procedure for children missing from the home has been overlooked. The children's guide has not been updated to show the changes that have been made to the service, children and young people's right to complain or the contact details of Ofsted. The additional information will enable parents and carers and young people to have greater confidence in the home's ability to manage these potentially challenging circumstances.

The home is formulating a written development plan. So far, they have been able to reflect on the improvements and changes made since the previous inspection. For example, major works have been undertaken to rearrange the building to separate the short breaks service from the long stay provision. Work is still in progress to provide an adapted kitchen to encourage children and young people to increase their independence skills. Also staff are being supported to gain a better understanding of the additional responsibilities they have for those young people living in the home permanently. Discussions with the manager show that the management team recognise that there are areas for development. These will be included in the plan. Targets include more robust recording of key work sessions and evidencing responses given to children and young people following children's meetings and comments in the happy, sad box.

Children and young people have the opportunity to be in an environment where the everyday challenges they face are understood by the staff that care for them. The

staff are dedicated and committed they provide additional opportunities for children and young people to express themselves, draw on their own talents and discover new abilities.

The staff confirm that they are supported by a competent and effective manager and her deputies. The manager shares her vision for a high quality service and strives to reach this with staff through supervision, team meetings and modelling good practice. One member of staff said, 'We get good support from the managers, we attend team meetings and I am able to speak my mind.'

Staff are suitably qualified to provide care for vulnerable children and young people and regular updates of mandatory training is undertaken. However the staff have not received medication training for some time and changes in procedure and governance may require updating.

Monthly Regulation 33 visits take place and the manager receives timely reports indicating where improvements or areas for development are required. These reports have not been forwarded to Ofsted.

Children and young people are kept safe in the home through a robust approach to all matters of health and safety. Fire drills, regular testing of fire safety equipment and gas and electrical fittings and appliances ensure that children and young people's health and safety are not compromised.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.