

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	16/02/2012
Inspector	Clare Davies
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	28/09/2011
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This children's home is registered to care for five boys and girls with learning difficulties and associated disabilities. The home is run by a private company and can offer the flexibility of short breaks in addition to long-term placements.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: a service that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

Good: a service 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**.

Children and young people benefit from good levels of support from a dedicated staff team who enjoy their work. The homely environment welcomes children and young people with disabilities and is suitably resourced for sensory and stimulating play. Personalised communication systems ensure that children and young people are consulted and that they can contribute to the planning of their care.

Children and young people enjoy the experiences offered and the opportunities for activities in the home and the wider community. The supportive caring environment helps them to form positive relationships with adults, other children and young people. Consistency of care and structured routines enable children and young people to make progress in their personal development.

The safety and well-being of children and young people is paramount. A risk assessment framework effectively balances safety whilst allowing children and young people to be supported in trying new things such as, using public transport or sliding down a water flume at a swimming pool. These care practices promote safety and equality of opportunity for children and young people with disabilities.

The strong management of this service strives to raise standards of care, learning through inspection activity and monitoring systems. Having completed an audit of the first six months of operation, the management team are aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the service. Staff receive sound support from the management team with a good training programme. Parents and social workers report high levels of satisfaction with this service.

There are some shortfalls in administrative tasks and record keeping. These relate to placement plans, pocket money, individual care records and maintaining a register.

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
12A (2001)	ensure that for each child placed in the home, the registered person agrees and signs the plan in accordance with the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010 (Regulation 12A(1))	17/02/2012
29 (2001)	maintain in the children's home the records specified in Schedule 4 and ensure they are kept up to date. In particular, a register as detailed in 1 (a-f) and record of all money deposited by a child for safekeeping (7). (Regulation 29 (1) Schedule 4)	29/02/2012

Recommendations

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

- ensure that records are clear, up to date and stored securely, and contribute to an understanding of the child's life. (NMS 22)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Children and young people have a planned transition into this service, this assists them in becoming familiar with the staff and the environment before their first overnight stay. Parents and carers are fully involved with the introduction and provide key information about their child's needs and routines. This ensures that children and young people are cared for according to their parent's wishes.

Children and young people receive highly personalised care from the staff, this contributes to them making good progress in their personal development. Imaginative and adaptable methods of communication support children and young people in making informed decisions and expressing themselves. Children and young people choose what activities they would like to do and are supported with

timescales through use of large egg timers, pictures of clock faces and countdown charts. These tools reduce the anxiety as to when an activity will finish and supports children and young people in understanding what will happen next.

Children and young people benefit from this new service as it has enabled some to return to the area to be nearer their families, previously in placements several miles away. For these children and young people they have increased opportunities to see their families and are able to be reintegrated into their local community.

Children and young people are supported in following a healthy lifestyle through physical activities and a nutritious diet. The garden and a hot tub provide excellent opportunities for exercise and fun and children and young people also enjoy visiting parks and leisure facilities in the community. The staff team liaise with a multi-disciplinary team to ensure that the correct equipment is available to support the children and young people. This ensures that they are suitably provided for and have their individual needs met. In addition children and young people go to the local surgery, dentist and optician. This contributes to young people developing their independence and becoming familiar with community resources.

A committed approach to education ensures that children and young people attend and participate with their learning. Staff develop good links with schools and colleges to promote consistency of care. This supports children and young people to feel secure at school with similar boundaries and expectations.

The involvement of children and young people is creative and purposeful. Use of pictures, symbols and sign language stimulates communication and participation. This ensures that they feel listened to and their contribution valued. Young people in long-term placements are regularly consulted, by using photographs, on the children and young people who will be using the short break service. Special arrangements are in place to support young people in long-term placements such as a dedicated corridor away from bedrooms used for short breaks, regular meetings with their key workers, and dedicated time with staff during the period when short breaks are starting and finishing. This reduces the impact of other young people arriving and leaving the home and provides reassurance from staff.

Parents and social workers report how the involvement of young people using short breaks can be beneficial to the young people in long-term placements as they see their school friends who stay for tea and a sleepover. Parents are very involved with this service regardless if their child is receiving a short break or a longer placement and they all report high levels of satisfaction with this service.

With support from staff children and young people are encouraged to develop personal and life skills, this contributes to the enhancement of their self-esteem. For example, children and young people are encouraged to clear their plates to put in the dishwasher and to change their bedding. Similarly with dressing and personal care, children and young people are supported to achieve their maximum potential.

Quality of care

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

A committed and proactive staff team meets the needs of children and young people, supporting them throughout their placement. Positive relationships are formed between the staff and the children and young people. Observations of interactions highlight the warmth and humour involved; this enables children and young people to feel relaxed and secure, knowing that they will be helped and comforted if upset.

Staff are ambitious for children and young people, they display pride and joy when talking about achievements. Staff can readily provide examples of development in the short time since placements began in this new service; social integration, reduction in challenging behaviour and development of independent skills. The staff team celebrate success with the children, young people and those adults who are significant to them. This enables young people to develop their self-esteem and gain in confidence.

Staff are persistent in seeking the views and wishes of the young people and encouraging them to take part in making contributions and choices. Staff challenge the barriers faced by young people with a learning disability and promote inclusion; this ensures that whenever possible, young people have access to services and facilities enjoyed by other young people. Through using photographs of key staff and picture symbols, the complaints procedure informs children and young people of who can support them with a worry or complaint. To further promote the view and wishes of children and young people, an advocate for a national charity visits regularly.

Children and young people are involved in care planning and the review of their care wherever possible. Pictures and symbols are selected to identify likes, dislikes and a range of emotions. This creative approach engages young people in their care planning process. Care plans identify matters such as; how I tell you when...I am happy, I am hungry, I am in pain and all other aspects of care. All but one of the children and young people have a care plan provided by their placing authority.

There are sound systems for the management of medication. Some children and young people have complex health care needs that are managed well by the range of skills amongst the staff team. This supports parents in the knowledge that their child is being cared for by competent, medically trained staff.

This service has a good range of resources enabling children and young people to experience purposeful and enjoyable activities. Sensory toys and stimulation provide interaction for many children and young people. Children and young people love to use the hot tub most days, this provides hydrotherapy and a lot of fun. Books and toys promote the educational development of children and young people along with music and a range of DVDs.

The property is a bungalow and located on the edge of a large town within walking distance from shops and community facilities. It has been decorated and furnished to a very high standard, offering a comfortable homely environment.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Parents report that they feel satisfied that their child is safe in this placement. This is underpinned, not only by the staff knowledge in child protection but through the physically safe environment. The building is secure without restricting children and young people's liberty, they can readily access their bedrooms and the kitchen. Audio and visual monitoring occurs during the night for some children and young people, this is undertaken due to complex medical needs and with full parental consent.

The supervision provided from good staffing levels minimises the risk of young people going missing. Procedures are known by staff if this situation should arise, this ensures prompt action can be taken and liaison with the police to secure the safety of any missing young person. The well-being of children and young people is firmly placed at the centre of staff practice. Staff receive training in safeguarding and team meetings promote regular updates. As a result, staff demonstrate a good understanding of the action to take should they have concerns about safety or welfare. Staff are knowledgeable about the particular vulnerabilities of the children and young people, there is a range of effective risk assessments to refer to in order to reduce known risks.

Staff communicate clear boundaries and expectations; this enables some children and young people to begin to understand there may be consequences for their behaviour. Praise and rewards are promoted with a few sanctions relevant to the behaviour and issued almost immediately. For example, misbehaviour in a communal room or the garden means leaving that area for five minutes. Records of such incidents are recorded and the effectiveness is monitored by the manager. Strategies to manage challenging behaviour form part of the care plan for children and young people. These documents are not consistently recorded in the same format. This could lead to staff confusion when trying to support children and young people in times of distress.

A robust procedure is adopted to employ new staff following safer recruitment practices, this also applies to volunteers ensuring young people are protected from unchecked adults. There is a sound approach to health and safety matters, fire detection and prevention. This is underpinned by policies, procedures and staff training resulting in children and young people benefitting from a safe environment.

Leadership and management

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

Children and young people benefit from this service that is managed well with effective leadership. The Registered Manager and Responsible Individual work collaboratively to ensure the home is well organised and sufficiently staffed to provide children and young people with stability and consistency of care. The offer of

short breaks is managed sensitively in considering the needs of those in longer term placements.

Staff and managers regularly consult with children, young people, their families through face-to-face contact and surveys. This level of monitoring ensures the management have a grasp of the strengths of the service and any areas to improve upon. This service is proactive in engaging and working with other professionals and agencies in order to support children and young people with special needs.

Children and young people receive good quality care from an experienced and skilled staff group who are committed to achieving the best outcomes. New staff say they are provided with good support and training to assist them in their role. Staff are kept up-to-date with new legislation and practice developments. The manager ensures that the home fulfils its commitment to children and young people as laid out in the Statement of Purpose and children's guide. This home lacks a register as required by the regulations for children's homes and there is confusion with two records of pocket money for each child and young person. These administrative tasks do not impact on the care delivered to children and young people.

Staff members are enthusiastic about their work and feel supported through regular supervision, good training opportunities and clear policies and procedures to guide them. The managers have established systems for monitoring the service and after six months of being operational they are planning a review to help inform the development plan for the next six months and longer term. Managers are keen to learn from monitoring and inspection activities to improve practice.

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.