

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Maire Atherton
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This children's home is a resource centre for children with disabilities and their families and is owned and managed by the local district council. One of the services offered at the centre is residential short break care for children with a disability. It is this aspect of the centre's activity that is regulated under the Children's Homes Regulations 2001. The centre is registered for five young people aged between eight and 17 years who have a learning and/or physical disability; many of the children also present challenging behaviour. Other services offered include day care, after school care and outreach services.

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**.

Children and young people using this service experience outstanding outcomes. Staff focus on capturing their views and incorporating them into their care plans. Staff enable children and young people to exercise choice in many aspects of their daily life through effective use of a range of methods of communication. Children are very happy in the home, enjoy their time in short breaks, have fun and are supported to learn new skills. Staff make certain that children's individual needs, including complex health care needs, are very well met and their dignity is maintained. Children and young people benefit from highly personalised care.

The practice in the home remains child centred, staff are deployed in accordance with the needs of those staying overnight and activities offered each evening reflect their interests and desired outcomes. Issues arising from complex health, communication and behavioural needs are addressed creatively so as to promote development. Staff working in partnership with parents and other professionals support children and young people in making excellent progress in all areas of their lives. A young person's improvements in mobility, diet and behaviour benefit the whole family as well as the young person themselves.

Staff are proactive in the promotion of health and safety in the home. Children and

young people benefit from a home that provides a safe, child-friendly environment, adapted to meet their individual needs.

There are two recommendations and one requirement made in this report, all relate to records that do not quite meet the required standard. These do not impact on outcomes for young people.

A real strength of the service is the stability and experience of the staff team together with the support from the Registered Manager. This consistency provides a strong foundation for the excellent relationships between the staff and the young people. A parent said, 'They love her almost as much as I do and take great care of her to ensure she stays safe and happy.'

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
17B (2001)	ensure that the recording of any measure of any control, restraint or discipline fully complies with Regulation 17B (3).	09/11/2012

Recommendations

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

- ensure that all care plans reflect the detail of care evident in practice (NMS 2.3)
- ensure a written risk assessment is in place in respect of the climbing frame. (NMS 10.8)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

The outcomes for children and young people and their families using this service are exceptional. One parent described the service as, 'An essential part of our lives! Our daughter is very happy there and we are secure knowing she is well cared for.' Staff are sensitive to changing moods and needs and respond appropriately, enabling self-determination in children and young people whenever possible. This enables them to maintain and develop skills and interests. For example effective communication skills

which enable them to make choices in their day-to-day living experiences, using a variety of verbal and non-verbal communication methods. Meal times are social occasions which are enjoyed by all. Children's individual preferences and dietary requirements are catered for in addition to the daily menu which offers balanced options at meal times.

Staff positively and effectively promote the health and education of young people in partnership with parents who retain the primary responsibility for these areas. Excellent communication leads to a high degree of consistency of approach by parents and professionals. Consequently young people are willing to try new food, make improvements in their self-care skills, sleep patterns and control of complex health issues. They also make progress at school and enjoy success as a result.

Partnership working is also in evidence in the assessment of children's needs prior to accessing the service and the development of the care plans. Transition arrangements, which include visiting the service to meet staff and joining in with activities before building up to an overnight stay, are flexible and tailored for each individual. This helps to develop the confidence and trust of both children and their parents in the staff.

Children and young people enjoy coming to the home and engage enthusiastically with staff in the activities on offer, wheelchair ice-skating and wall climbing are recent off site highlights. The sharing, taking turns in playing on games consoles and celebrating success provides welcome opportunities to establish and maintain peer relationships. There are positive, warm and inclusive relationships between the children and young people themselves and the staff team. Children and young people confidently approach and engage with staff. There is a good sense of fun and enjoyment evident in the interactions that take place. Independence skills are promoted in accordance with the individual care plans. For example children are supported and encouraged to brush their teeth, young people are given opportunities at a focus group to prepare snacks and drinks and learn other independence skills through participation in the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme.

Quality of care

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

Children and young people enjoy and benefit from warm relationships with staff who know them all very well. These relationships provide a firm foundation on which they can model and develop positive relationships with each other. Staff use a range of complementary and inclusive communication methods, including observation of behaviour, which ensures equality of opportunity for all children and young people. Staff enable children and young people to make meaningful choices, for example at meal times and selecting activities. Staff always ensure that they have understood a child's view or request fully and the smiling responses indicate that they get it right. Staff are quick to respond to and address any signs of distress or dissatisfaction expressed by children and young people, who also have easy access to a more formal method of making a complaint.

Each child has a detailed care plan which is very well personalised and describes their care needs, including those arising from faith and culture and risks and wishes. Most are excellent but not all contain the level of detail seen in practice, for example which style of cup best promotes the independence of a young person. Staff are creative in ensuring the voice of children and young people is heard as well as that of parents, key workers and significant others in the development and regular review of care plans. Staff achieve this by tailoring communication to each individual, supporting the expression of views and opinions through speech, the written word, choosing photographs and/or symbols or a combination of methods. Staff have also used these methods to enable children and young people to influence what happens within their local community and many parks now have more accessible play equipment as a direct result of their input.

Children and young people enjoy an excellent range of activities, both on and off site, for play, exercise and learning. The secure garden has range of play equipment, a climbing frame and a trampoline for example as well as a soft play cabin. Inside the house there is a multi-sensory room and an art room in addition to the lounge, dining and play rooms. Thus enabling young people to socialise or have time alone as they choose. There are a variety of resources within the home for arts and craft, the results of which are on display, and music and games. Offsite activities, range from the day to day such as trips to the parks and shops to the more adventurous ice skating, wall climbing and canoeing for example. The photos around the home of broadly smiling children engaged in these activities show their pleasure and also demonstrate what these young people can achieve.

Staff have established excellent links with schools and attend meetings to ensure that relevant information is shared, both written and verbal. This promotes a consistency of approach so that children benefit from evolving communication and behaviour management strategies. Staff support the education of young people by engaging children and young people in looking at books and talking about the pictures as well as ensuring that they are fully prepared and equipped when leaving for school.

In this short breaks unit the parents retain responsibility for meeting the health needs of their children and parents are confident that the service supports them in this. The range of health care needs, some of which are complex, are understood and exceptionally well managed by staff. They promote and maintain the respect and dignity for all children and young people at all times. Trained and experienced staff are highly effective in the management of medication.

The house is well located in a residential community. The property is very well decorated, maintained and furnished and there is a planned programme for refurbishment in place. Children have their own bedroom when staying and staff ensure children stay in the room best adapted to their needs. The home has appropriate adaptations to ensure the individual needs of children accessing the service are met, such as overhead tracking, specialist beds and adapted bathing facilities. An occupational therapist said 'They actively seek my advice regarding

children in their care and if they have any equipment or access adaptation / issues relating to the building.' There are robust systems to ensure that maintenance issues are addressed promptly. The standards of cleanliness throughout the home are excellent.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Children and young people using this short breaks service are and feel safe. They move confidently around the building and are relaxed and at ease in their interactions with staff. There is a great deal of laughter and a good sense of fun conveyed by young people and staff alike. A parent said, 'they take great care of her to ensure she stays safe and happy.'

Staff deployment, training and awareness, including specialist child protection training, ensures that children and young people are properly safeguarded. Any emerging child protection concerns are addressed promptly and referrals made where necessary. An equally robust approach is adopted in the recruitment of staff. All necessary checks are completed prior to a member of staff starting work. Visitors are checked upon arrival, sign the visitors' record and are supervised on site as appropriate. Thus children's safety is properly promoted.

There is careful planning of the groups of children receiving care at any one time to achieve a good level of compatibility and reduce the potential for challenging behaviour that may distress other children. Staff are vigilant in their supervision of children and young people to ensure that young people interact safely and successfully. This vigilance reduces accidents and minimises the opportunities for children to go missing or any behaviour that could be interpreted as bullying to occur. Staff are trained in an approved behaviour management technique by accredited in-house trainers. There is a clear emphasis on distraction and diversion and staff use these tactics to good effect and share them with parents. Generally there are good standards of recording relating to behaviour management. Most positive handling plans provide staff with sufficient detail to provide the level and type of support required, some do not and rely on individual interpretation. Some of the incident and sanctions records are incomplete and do not fully meet requirements. The manager is in the process of reviewing these recording systems and is also further developing monitoring systems, for example graphic illustrations. A placing social worker commented, 'many of the children and young people have challenging and sometimes anti-social behaviour due to their disabilities. This is addressed appropriately by all staff.'

The home provides children and young people with a physically safe and secure environment. The systems for ensuring that servicing and maintenance of services and specialist equipment, fire alarm tests and drills take place as required are exceptionally thorough. Risk assessments of the environment are undertaken and reviewed regularly, so as to keep children safe. These include some restrictions on movement within the home through the use of electronic keypads on some

communal doors. The risk assessed use of beam breakers on bedroom doors instantly alerts waking night staff to a child leaving their bedroom, so providing an additional safeguard. Risk assessments are detailed and thorough with one exception, that relating to the climbing frame. Assessments for activities are called 'opportunities assessments' so that staff focus on what needs to be put in place to enable a child to undertake an activity safely.

Leadership and management

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

The long serving management team is skilled and experienced and delivers highly effective leadership of the home. Children and young people benefit from the delivery of exceptional quality care that meets the individual needs of those receiving short breaks at the home and expands their horizons.

In June 2012 the manager of the home took on additional responsibilities to provide an integrated resource for children with learning disabilities. The additional resources include weekend clubs, an outreach and sitting service, a focus group and family based short breaks. An appointment to an additional assistant unit manager post has been made in recognition of the increased management workload. Children and young people benefit from consistency of care through the integration of resources. For example a child familiar with staff in one setting is supported in a new setting by a known member of staff, providing a smooth transition leading to improved outcomes.

The manager robustly monitors and evaluates the service, through consultation, analysis of records and observation of practice as part of his drive for continual improvement. As noted by a member of staff, 'The constant at Bridges is change, with a focus on continually improving the services we offer.' The manager views complaints positively, responds promptly and uses the information to improve practice across the service where relevant. The sole requirement made in the last report has been met, all monthly visits have taken place and the reports are used to good effect.

There is a very detailed statement of purpose and the service achieves the aims and objectives set out in this. Parents and placing social workers know what to expect and express high levels of satisfaction with the service. A parent said, 'I am confident they will provide a high standard of care. Staff are committed to their work. The individual needs of the child are paramount.'

The established, well qualified staff team are child focused. They work very well together, building on individual strengths so as to meet the complex and diverse needs of the young people using the service. The management team provide excellent guidance through daily handovers, regular supervision and team meetings. This is underpinned by comprehensive training, which has a clear focus and relevance for the children using the service. Staffing levels reflect both the individual and group needs of the young people and ensure that young people's care and

activities can be safely delivered as planned. Any shortfall in staffing is addressed by the use of sessional staff known to the children. The staff team is a good mix of age and gender and staff are sensitive to the cultural needs of the young people. A regular visitor commented, 'They are a very caring staff team, they interact constantly with the young people and make lots of suggestions for things to do.'

Records are well maintained and provide a clear picture of a child's stay in the home, their achievements and progress, supported by lots of photographs. Parents are kept informed through the use of a diary that accompanies the child. Confidential records are kept in locked cabinets with restricted access, ensuring young people's privacy is protected. Reviews take place as required and reflect close working relationships with parents, placing social workers, health and education, ensuring that information is shared efficiently, leading to excellent outcomes for the young people.

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.