

## Inspection report for children's home

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<b>Inspector</b>	Keith Riley / Liz Driver
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Full
<b>Provision subtype</b>	Children's home

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## Service information

### Brief description of the service

The home can accommodate up to 26 children in 4 separate houses based on the same site. The home caters for children with a variety of disabilities, primarily epilepsy and learning difficulties. The home is operated by a registered charity.

### 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, with a variety of complex needs, live in a nurturing and supportive environment in which they receive a good standard of personalised care. Seeking the views of children with communication difficulties is integral to how the home operates. A motivated and committed staff team secures positive outcomes for children who live in this home. Staff receive good training that is regularly refreshed. However, this does not include further training in autism.

Children are safe in this home, they say they feel safe. They relax in an environment where there are positive relationships with those around them.

Children benefit from the consistent strategies that are applied through staff working closely with others such as health and educational professionals to ensure a consistent approach. Staff are aware of the most up-to-date information to support the children in their care. However, the systems in place to ensure the written records reflect the most current practice are not always effective. This occurred on two occasions since the last inspection but has no negative impact on the children.

The Registered Manager is very aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the home and is implementing positive developments. Changes to some computer management systems and behaviour management training means that children benefit from a home that is seeking to continually develop and improve its service. However, some minor repairs and refurbishment, already identified by the management, have not yet been completed.

Two other minor shortfalls were found; children with severe communication difficulties do not always have the opportunity to comment on an intervention and some reports required by regulation are not being sent to Ofsted.

## Areas for improvement

### Recommendations

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

- consider how children are given an opportunity to discuss incidents of restraint they have been involved in, witnessed or been affected by, with a relevant adult, in particular children with severe communication difficulties (NMS 3.17)
- provide a comfortable and homely environment that is well maintained and decorated, in particular complete the identified maintenance issues such as repairs to a ball pool, guttering and replacement of the carpets/flooring (NMS 10.3)
- consider how staff are equipped with the skills required to meet the needs of the children and purpose of the setting, in particular autism training (NMS 18.1)
- ensure there is a system in place to monitor the quality and adequacy of record-keeping and take action when needed (NMS 22.1)
- supply a copy of regulation 34 reports to HMCI at six monthly intervals. (Volume 5 statutory guidance para 3.14)

### Outcomes for children and young people

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

Overall, outcomes for children are good. Children benefit from highly individualised support which helps them develop their life and social skills. Their life experiences and confidence are enriched in a caring and nurturing environment at a pace suitable to their cognitive ability.

The home's extensive engagement with health, education, social services and other professionals result in good outcomes for children. There is a cohesive approach giving children who live in this home the optimum opportunity to progress. There is a history of success in behaviour management, communication skills, improved health and education. Intense support and therapy into the lives of children with complex health needs is successful. The psychological needs of children are fully met and behaviours that challenge are significantly reduced as a result of living in this home.

Children are at the centre of practice and there is a culture of respect and dignity. Children feel comfortable with staff and interact well with them. Staff understand the specific ways each individual child communicates. This means children with severe communication difficulties have a voice and relationships between children and staff

are very good. Professionals say they are impressed with the attention to detail. The life experiences and confidence of children are enriched. They are able to express themselves in as calm an environment as possible. As a result significant incidents are infrequent.

Children are supported in their independent living skills and make good progress, for example, walking to school or being able to dress independently. Children engage constructively with the wider community on a daily basis. Staff provide good support and supervision to enable children to go to a range of activities that they enjoy such as accessing a film club or going to a youth group. Children are encouraged to express their own individuality and to develop their own individual interests within the home such as imaginative play or cause and effect toys. The range of activities undertaken means children develop confidence in their own ability.

Children have excellent contact with their parents and staff are accessible to discuss the current and future needs of the children. Staff are committed to working to support parents to have regular and positive contact with their children; this includes using technology such as video conferencing. Children have a sense of identity and belonging.

## **Quality of care**

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

Children who have profound communication problems and learning difficulties are supported by staff who communicate effectively with them, each other and other professionals. Staff's good communication skills are encouraging children to express their wishes and feelings and make choices using their preferred method of communication, such as gestures or photographs. Staff are attentive to what children are communicating through their behaviour. The daily practices create a positive environment and allows the voice of children to be heard.

Children benefit from the consistent relationships that are in place between them and those who care for them. Key staff demonstrate motivation and continued interest in the welfare of individuals. Children are treated respectfully by their carers who understand their particular needs. The care planning clearly outlines children's needs in detail and highlights children's uniqueness. Staff demonstrate a full understanding of each child's needs and the vast majority of written information is up to date. However, not all records are fully updated when a child moves to another unit. This occurred on two occasions but action had been taken in addressing young people's needs. The approach to promoting each child's individuality ensures that equality and diversity is promoted to a good level taking into account the wishes of the parents.

Good care and support with effective interagency working provide for a continual sharing of information about children's care. There is clear and easy access to other professionals including a clinical psychologist, speech and language therapist, physiotherapist and occupational therapist. Staff said they are strongly supported by their peers, their management and other professionals, for example in 'team around

the pupil' meetings. The joined up working within the staff team and with other agencies, such as health and education, provide the best possible strategies to achieve the best possible outcomes. For example, children's health is looked after extremely well, seizures activity is monitored and managed exceptionally well.

There is a robust procedure for the administration of medication. All necessary consents are on file. Children are administered medication safely in accordance with the prescription. Close liaison with the medical centre on site means that any changes are addressed promptly and there is easy access to advice in an emergency.

Education is highly valued and children's attendance at school is very good. Staff are unquestionably committed to ensuring children attend school. For example, care staff support the transition to school in the morning.

Children do not have the ability to understand the concept of making a complaint. Instead they use non-verbal communication and behaviour to show when they are feeling sad, unhappy or poorly. Staff are vigilant and identify when something is wrong and make every effort to find out what the problem is and sort it out. Parents feel they can talk to staff about their child's care as often as they like and that staff keep them fully informed of their child's progress. Children have access to an advocate who makes their needs known.

Children live in a healthy environment that actively promotes their physical health and emotional well-being. They are fully supported to develop healthy lifestyles. Staff understand the importance of a well-balanced diet and children with dietary needs are fully supported. Individual plans in consultation with others, for example an occupational therapist, means that children have the right equipment to enable them to participate in meal times. Meal times are a social and happy occasion.

There is a commitment to provide a pleasant living environment and the home is maintained to a very high standard. Children's bedrooms are well designed and furnished to promote children's privacy and meet any specific needs they may have in relation to their health and disability. Maintenance issues identified at inspection were known to management with clear plans to address them.

## **Safeguarding children and young people**

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

Children are safe in the home and indicate they feel safe. Their safety and well-being is at the heart of all practice in the home. The extreme vulnerabilities of the children are understood by all members of staff and this ensures that their approach to ensuring their safety is conscientious and rigorous. A comprehensive knowledge of individual needs and excellent detailed strategies that are applied meticulously safeguards children and manages risk.

There is meticulous recording of incidents involving children that are monitored by

the management and other professionals. This provides feedback into practice and is effective in reducing the intensity, frequency and duration of incidents.

Consequently, physical intervention is minimal, of low-level and short duration. Strategies are working to decrease the need for physical intervention and children make significant improvements in a short period of time in the home. Staff are fully trained in the home's approved behaviour management restraint techniques and apply these strategies professionally and only when really necessary. Meticulous records are kept in accordance with regulation. However, not all children with severe communication difficulties are given the opportunity to give their view on every occasion after an intervention. Non-verbal clues from children indicating how they are feeling are readily picked up by staff and acted upon. This means that de-escalation techniques are applied quickly and effectively. Measures to protect individual children are given careful consideration as to the impact on other children accommodated at the same time.

Risk assessments are incorporated into individual and specific behaviour management support plans which clearly identify the required strategies to keep children safe. The most up-to-date risks are identified and the welfare of children continues to be promoted. Staff demonstrate excellent knowledge of procedures to be followed. Children are not denied access to activities and their safeguarding is not compromised.

Staff have comprehensive safeguarding training that is regularly refreshed. Staff have a thorough understanding of safeguarding procedures in order that they can appropriately respond to any signs or allegations of abuse. The management ensures that all the relevant agencies are informed of any safeguarding issues. This ensures that strategies and plans can be developed in the event of any concerns being identified. Effective management and adherence to robust policies ensure all are protected and supported. The culture embedded in the home ensures that the children benefit from a robust and rigorous approach which treats the children's emotional and physical safety as paramount. Staff say, 'The safeguarding manager is highly supportive and progressive, encouraging best practice and championing the students' rights'.

Staff recognise that children's disabilities can make them extremely vulnerable if left unsupervised. Very good staffing levels provide close supervision, which enables children to feel safe and secure. Due to the close levels of supervision of the children missing from care is not an issue. There are specific risk assessments in place to ensure children are safe while accessing the community.

A robust recruitment process includes all the necessary checks before a new staff member commences work. This means that children are cared for by suitable adults.

The home is physically safe and appropriately secure. Health and safety certificates verify the safety of the environment. Children live in a safe environment that is regularly monitored. Staff take active steps to keep themselves, children and visitors safe from the risk of fire and other potential safety hazards. For example, children have individual personal emergency evacuation plans and there is regular practice

and test of the procedures to be followed in an emergency.

## **Leadership and management**

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

The home is very effectively managed and monitored. Staff speak positively of their direct line management support and of the Registered Manager. Regular supervision and peer support strengthens staffs' competencies in dealing effectively with the complex needs of the children in their care. Staff describe their team as 'good' and 'committed'.

There is a culture of continuous improvement. The staff team are highly motivated to continually promote and improve the welfare of children in the home. The professional care, support and therapy mean that children are making good progress in relation to their starting points. The home is meeting its aims and objectives in accordance with the Statement of Purpose.

Regular audits of policies, procedures and practice take place; these are rigorous. For instance, monthly visits are undertaken by an external auditor. Restraint logs, incidents and behaviour support plans are also regularly monitored to ensure that systems operate in accordance with and above the minimum standards. However, reports required by regulation are not being sent to Ofsted in accordance with statutory guidance. Regular team meetings discuss the well-being of the children and their individual needs. The conduct of the home and effectiveness of the care provided are being constantly assessed.

Staff are subject to a comprehensive induction programme and must satisfy the management of their competencies during a probation period. There is a wide range of training throughout all levels of the team and all members understand the individual and personal needs of the children they care for. Staff are guided and supported by relevant professionals. However, they have not received formal training in autism. Behaviours that challenge are understood by all and children are treated with dignity and respect. The detailed, individualised and positive intervention behaviour management plans provide the platform for a consistent approach and the subsequent positive outcomes. Comments from social work professionals include: 'there is a strong manager' and 'staff are attentive to individual needs'.

The home employs other highly qualified and experienced professionals who have a successful track record in their specialism. The effectiveness of behaviour management strategies are continually reviewed by the management in consultation with other professionals such as a clinical psychologist. The close collaborative working ensures that staff and resources are channelled effectively. Consequently staff are enthusiastic about their role and the difference their support makes in the lives of the children they care for.

The home has very effective links with external agencies and promptly informs them of notifiable incidents. This is a home with an open culture which reflects regularly

on practice with a view to improving outcomes for children.

## 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.