

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Judith Longden
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home is run by the local authority and is registered provide short breaks for a maximum of eight children who have a learning disability.

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 **adequate**.

This short breaks service provides an adequate quality of care with individual plans for children, based on their needs. The short breaks are planned well and children are able to maintain friendships during their stay. Children enjoy coming to the home and have good relationships with staff and with each other.

Children are supported to share their views and make choices in their care and the running of the home. Children make good progress in achieving positive outcomes in all aspects of their lives but their records are not always up-to-date. Staff work in partnership with parents to ensure outcomes are progressed in the family home as well as on their short break.

Children are kept safe in a number of ways but there is insufficient supervision of some activities to ensure the safety of children.

The manager understands the strengths of the home and areas that require development. There is a development plan in place to improve the service. There are two requirements made in relation to supervising activities and recording in children's records. The manager has already begun to address these shortfalls.

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
23 (2001)	ensure any activities in which children participate are so far as reasonably practicable free from avoidable risks. This relates to the deployment of staff and supervision of activities (Regulation 23(b))	19/12/2012
28 (2001)	ensure records in respect of each child accommodated in the home are kept up to date. (Regulation 28(1)(b))	19/12/2012

Recommendations

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

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Children make good progress in achieving positive outcomes in all areas. The home has had a significant impact in supporting this progress. A social worker said, 'The home makes a big difference to children and their families.' Staff work closely with families, providing an outreach service to support children and parents in the family home. Parents receive support and guidance on children's behaviour, healthcare and the development of skills. This means the progress children make on short breaks is continued in the family home.

Children enjoy a variety of healthy, home cooked meals when they stay at the home. Menus provide a balanced diet and take into account children's medical dietary needs and their preferences. Outdoor activities, sport and exercise are encouraged in order to promote healthy living. Children also benefit from quiet time and relaxation opportunities. Children who are anxious about medical appointments are supported by staff. For example a child who does not like the optician was provided with a resource pack and activities about eyes and keeping healthy. Staff supported them to understand the eye tests and the child has attended the optician and now has glasses. Children enjoy good health as a result of the strategies used by staff.

Children benefit from access to a range of activities that provide new and challenging experiences. They are encouraged to engage in community activities and events, such as, firework displays and jubilee parties. The home holds an annual garden party which members of the local community attend. This supports children to feel part of their wider community and enjoy the activities and social life this provides. The home also provides activities such as music, art and soft play. As a result children develop new skills and grow in confidence.

Children are achieving good outcomes in their school education and this is complemented by the provision of learning activities while on their short break. These activities include: learning to use a telephone; understanding road safety and developing basic independence skills. As a result children achieve their potential and learn skills appropriate to their age and understanding.

Older children and young people who use the short breaks service are supported in their transition to adult services. Staff work closely with adult care teams and joint team meetings are held. Staff support older children and young people in viewing properties and shared supported accommodation.

Quality of care

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

The planning of the short breaks takes into account the views of parents and friendship groups. Children receive well-planned care that meets their individual needs as well as their likes and dislikes. Key-workers identify tasks for them to achieve and these are reviewed prior to every stay. Achievements are recorded on children's files and shared with social workers and parents. However, not all staff update children's records in a timely manner and there are some inconsistencies in the various log books used for recording. Records therefore, do not always reflect what a particular care episode has been like for children.

Children are able to participate in making choices about routines, activities and life in the home using various formats and communication methods. They make good use of key-work meetings and house meetings to express their views and share their experiences within the home. Meetings are also used as a learning experience. For example, children have discussed the menu for the home and learnt about healthy eating through activities and quizzes. As a result they participate in day-to-day decisions about their lives and have a say in the running of the home.

The views of parents are sought through meetings with staff and through correspondence. They attended an open day to discuss the proposed new-build and the service it aims to provide.

Children are supported if they wish to complain. Good information on how to complain and who to speak to is available in a variety of formats for both children and their parents. There have been no complaints from either young people or their parents. The home has received a number of compliments from parents, one said, 'Thank you for the extended stay, it has been a real help.'

Staff have a sound knowledge of a variety of communication methods and are able to respond to the individual communication needs of children. As a result, children benefit from positive interaction and engagement with staff. One child said, 'I like it here, it is good.' Children are supported to make and sustain friendships, one social worker said, 'They are given the opportunity to socialise.'

Staff have good relationships with a range of healthcare professionals and work closely with parents who primarily retain responsibility for their child's healthcare. This promotes the physical, emotional and psychological health of the children. Staff are trained in first aid and the safe handling and administration of medication. This means the arrangements for dealing with medication are safe and effective.

Children enjoy a variety of activities and leisure pursuits within the home, garden and play areas. This includes use of a range of outdoor play equipment, sensory room, soft play, arts and crafts and computers. Staff encourage children to engage in trips to the forest and the local village to as a means of enjoying their interests as well as engaging in the community. As a result children benefit from access to a range of activities and events they would not otherwise have the opportunity to experience.

The service creates an environment of learning providing education on social skills, participation and confidence-building. As a result children continually learn and develop. Staff work in partnership with parents and schools to ensure the educational needs of children are met. This means there is consistency in the support children receive at home, in school and on their short break.

The home is located in a village with local amenities and access to public transport. The home provides a welcoming, family environment. There are plans to move to a new build on an adjacent site but in the meantime the current building is being re-decorated and is maintained to a reasonable standard, given its age.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

The home provides an environment of care and support where bullying is not tolerated. Staff and managers are aware of the ages and behaviour of children and of the dynamics of the group and plan groupings to reduce any risk posed. Staff are aware of presenting behaviours and are able to address any behavioural concerns before they escalate into bullying.

Positive behaviour is encouraged by giving lots of praise and frequent expressions of approval. These strategies are supported by strong, positive relationships between children and staff. The use of sanctions is in accordance with the understanding of the child and records include their comments to show whether they think sanctions are fair. One child commented on a sanction saying, 'Ok it's a deal'.

Staffs are trained in managing challenging behaviour and methods of intervention. The use of physical restraint is as a last resort. Any use of restraint is recorded appropriately. As a result, children interact positively with staff and each other and behave appropriately.

Children are generally kept safe and indicate that they feel safe in the home. They are aware of who to talk to if they have any concerns. Children benefit from a range of good safeguarding policies and procedures, such as, child protection and handling

allegations, which are implemented by staff. Staff receive good safeguarding training and are clear on their role in the safeguarding process. There have been no incidents of children going missing from the home but staff are aware of the procedures to follow should such an incident occur.

Children are protected, from unsuitable people gaining employment, by a robust recruitment process. Visitors to the home are asked to sign in and identification is checked. This further ensures children are protected from significant harm.

A range of proportionate risk assessments, enable young people to experience new challenges and develop new skills. However, there has been one incident where a child sustained a minor injury during an activity that was not sufficiently supervised. Staff responded appropriately to the incident and ensured the child was cared for and received the appropriate treatment. There have been no incidents of children going missing from the home. Staff are aware of the procedures to follow should a child be absent.

Children stay in a home that provides the appropriate level of security to ensure their safety and well-being. Regular fire, maintenance and equipment checks further promote their safety. Fire drills are held as required. This means the building is safe and secure and children are protected.

Leadership and management

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

Children benefit from a service that encourages them to achieve and progress in all aspects of their lives. A number of improvements have been made since the last inspection including more person-centred approach to care planning and the development of the outreach service to families.

The home has met the two recommendations made at the last inspection. The home is being decorated and maintained to a suitable standard. The home now has a policy on the use of monitoring systems and this is included in the home's Statement of Purpose. This ensures families and placing authorities have full information about the service provided. However, two requirements for improvement are made as a result of this inspection.

Children are provided with good information about the home in an easy to read welcome guide provided in various formats appropriate to their communication needs.

The home is managed by suitable personnel who are qualified and experienced, ensuring a service that is effective in supporting children to reach their full potential.

The manager understands the strengths of the service and the areas that require development the home and has a comprehensive development plan for improvements to the service. The manager and senior staff take robust action to

address any identified shortfalls to ensure the service improves.

Staff have a variety of skills, qualifications and experience and bring different strengths to the service. Where agency staff are used, the manager uses the same staff where possible to ensure continuity in the care of children.

Staff receive a good induction and benefit from a variety of training and development opportunities. The training material is relevant and of good quality. As a result, the competency and skills of the staff improve and they are better able to meet the needs of children by implementing their learning in practice.

Staff receive good, regular supervision and are supported by the manager and senior team. Regular team meetings are held to discuss good practice and any issues or concerns and also provide additional learning opportunities, such as, practice in signs and symbols. As a result staff are supported in their role.

The home has robust quality assurance procedures. The registered provider undertakes visits to the home, in accordance with regulations, and monitors the quality of care and welfare of the children. This includes consultation with children and parents where possible. The manager monitors records kept by the home to identify any concerns, patterns or trends.

Records are stored securely and information sharing is in accordance with data protection. All significant events relating to the protection of children in the home are notified as appropriate and actions taken as required.

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.