

Inspection report for children's home

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<b>Inspection date</b>	25/06/2013
<b>Inspector</b>	Anne Bannister
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Full
<b>Provision subtype</b>	Children's home

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<b>Date of last inspection</b>	05/10/2012
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## Service information

### Brief description of the service

This four bedded children's home is run by a registered charity and provides short breaks care for children and young people with physical and/or learning disabilities.

### 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**.

This is the first inspection of this newly registered short break children's home. The home was registered in October 2012 but only secured funding to start offering short term care from May 2013. Children and young people with disabilities and complex needs enjoy short breaks in a caring and supportive environment that enables them to have fun and make excellent progress in all aspects of their lives.

Children and young people learn new skills and have improved socialisation with their peers through participating in a wide range of meaningful activities. These also promote young people's inclusion in the wider community. Parents say that 'this kind of facility is invaluable to families who have children with special needs as it provides a much-needed break both for the family and the child. The children are well looked after and there are lots of stimulating activities for them to do.'

Children and young people feel safe and protected from significant harm during their periods of care. Parents and social workers are very happy with the quality of care and the support children and young people receive.

Staff have a clear understanding of how to deliver high quality child-care practice. They know the objectives of each child's placement and work in partnership with parents and with other agencies to ensure children and young people have to access the services they need. The home provides personalised and carefully planned short breaks that take account of individual needs.

The service is focused on achieving positive outcomes for all children and young people, incorporating their daily routines into placement planning. The home

achieves this by ensuring strategies are in place to manage children and young people's needs and behaviour, while taking into account their characters, interests and disabilities.

The home is effectively managed. The manager provides strong leadership and works hard to improve the service. There is a strong emphasis on providing a high standard of professionalism and child-care practice. Although the provider and manager effectively monitor the running of the home and develop the service to try to improve outcomes for children and young people, some shortfalls had not been One requirement and one recommendation for improvement have been made following this inspection relating to staff recruitment and the locking of doors.

## 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
26 (2001)	ensure that the home does not employ persons unless they are fit to work at a children's home. Specifically this relates to the need to evidence safe recruitment practice is implemented (Regulation 26 (1) (a))	31/07/2013

### Recommendations

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

- ensure that children's liberty is not restricted in a home which is not approved by the Secretary of State as a secure children's home. In particular, ensure that doors are not locked in order to restrict a young person's liberty (NMS 10.4 and Statutory guidance, Volume 5, paragraph 2.107)

### Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Children and young people are happy and settled during their short break stays. They benefit from a comprehensive assessment of their needs being undertaken prior to attending the home. Careful matching of placements ensures children and young people's needs are compatible. This makes staying at the home an enjoyable experience for all young people. A parent described how the home provides 'fun in a

purposeful way' with children and young people being encouraged to develop their independence and life skills while being engaged in activities that are fun and stimulate and encourage their development.'

Children and young people look forward to coming to the home and enjoy a wide range of meaningful activities. Staff are well informed about their likes and dislikes and do not include them in any activities that may cause them distress. For instance, quiet activities are arranged for those children that don't like excessive noise or crowds.

The main responsibility for young people's general health needs, such as medical and dental care, remains with their parents and carers. Health needs are well met and children and young people's well-being promoted and protected by safe practices within the home. Children and young people lead a healthy lifestyle and they benefit from receiving good support, from staff, on health related issues.

Although primary responsibility for education also remains with their careers, the home's communication with schools ensures there is a shared understanding of practices. This provides consistency of approach which helps children and young people learn and achieve. They stay in a stimulating environment that promotes their learning and development. They have easy access to a wide range books, computers, art materials, games and other educational resources.

## **Quality of care**

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

Children and young people thrive in the warm and caring atmosphere created by the manager and staff team. Parents and social workers are extremely positive about the quality of care provided at the home. Many of the children and young people are already known to the service before they begin having short stays in the home. As a result, staff are able to identify which groups of young people will enjoy each other's company.

The provision of carefully planned introductions for potential service users and their families, helps children and young people become familiar with the home. This contributes to them feeling safe and knowing what to expect when they start to stay overnight. These activities also provide opportunities to allay any anxieties which parents sometimes have about leaving their children in the care of others. Young people said 'We both go to the Saturday club and were very excited when we knew we would be able to have weekend stays together as we get on well.'

Staff always place the well-being of individual children and young people at the centre of their practice. They are very knowledgeable about individual children and young people's levels of understanding and comprehension associated with disability. As a result, staff engage appropriately and provide the support and reassurance children and young people need to reduce their anxieties. They understand how best to communicate with individuals in ways that children and young people easily

understand. This enables children and young people to express their wishes and feelings and make choices.

Children and young people are routinely encouraged to be involved in the planning for their care during their stays at the home. For example children and young people identify who they would like to support them at meal-times, whether they would like a bath or a shower and activities they would like to do. Parents report that children and young people view their stays in the home as 'going for a sleep over with friends' and say that 'staff are very friendly and approachable, nothing is too much trouble, my child enjoys attending and looks forward to his next visit.' They also say that the children and young people are well looked after, with 'lots of stimulating activities for them to do, providing them with social interaction with their peers as well as a sense of independence'.

Children and young people are cared for in line with the home's care plans. The plans are in the early stages of development. Currently they do not always adequately reflect the good level of support young people receive and which promote positive outcomes during their stays at the home. Managers are taking action to ensure an evaluation of the outcomes for young people are recorded and care plans updated following every stay at the home.

The home is appropriately located and provides very high quality accommodation that meets children and young people's needs. It is furnished, decorated and equipped to a high standard. Bright and well equipped indoor and outdoor activity and play areas provide a range of opportunities for children and young people to develop their skills and socialise with their peers. The home is located within the local community, which promotes inclusion for disabled children.

### **Safeguarding children and young people**

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

Staff are very knowledgeable about children and young people's particular vulnerabilities relating to their level of understanding and disability. This enables them to ensure children and young people are safe during their stays at the home and in the community. Staff balance the need for protection with enabling children and young people to take reasonable risks as part of their growth and development. For example, children and young people are always suitably supervised and any activities in the community are carefully planned. All safety precautions are put into place, including adjustments to the physical environment. These are based on careful risk assessments which allows some freedom balanced alongside the need to keep them safe.

There are appropriate procedures for dealing with any safeguarding issues that are understood by staff. Staff undertake, and regularly review, their safeguarding training through which they continue to keep children and young people safe.

Children and young people interact positively with staff and good relationships exist.

Behaviour management plans focus on how positive social behaviour will be encouraged and developed, for example, through rewards, distraction and praise. There has been no use of sanctions; which is appropriate given the assessed needs and understanding of the children and young people accommodated. Physical intervention in managing behaviours has not been necessary. Staff are clear that it would only ever be used as a very last resort.

The home is appropriately secured and prevents access by unwanted visitors. Visitors to the home have their identity checked and their reasons for visiting is confirmed prior to entering the building. However, some care plans show written permission has been provided by some parents to routinely lock the front door; which is a restriction of liberty. The current high levels of staffing and supervision reduce the likelihood of children and young people leaving the building unobserved and alleviate the necessity to restrict the liberty of children or young people in a children's home which is not approved as secure accommodation.

Young people are safe and protected within the home because staffing ratios are planned in line with the assessed needs of the young people staying- for example an assessment will be made as to whether waking night staff are required. Incidents of children and young people going missing from this home have not occurred. Protocols with the police are in place to help ensure that children are returned quickly, should any incidents of going missing occur.

Recruitment practice protects the vulnerable young people cared for. Staff are assessed for their skills and competencies in meeting the needs of individual young people. However, recruitment files show that while all other checks are completed, only the reference from the last employer is verified. This aspect of practice is not fully in line with safer recruitment guidelines that indicate all references received must be verified in order to fully promote the safety and well-being of young people.

## **Leadership and management**

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

Children and young people stay in a home that is effectively and efficiently managed in their best interests. The home provides a non-stigmatising, safe, caring and attractive environment that assists children and young people to develop their personal, social, and life skills. Parents said there is 'a lovely warm and caring atmosphere, so much so my child doesn't like coming home when it's time to leave.' Parents and social workers express disappointment that limited funding severely restricts the amount of support the home is able to provide in terms of short term care.

The organisation has its own comprehensive induction process for each new starter. It equips staff with the skills necessary to carry out their roles. It covers all key issues such as behaviour management, safeguarding, first aid, safe medication handling, and basic food hygiene and fire safety awareness.

All new staff also undertake the Children's Workforce Development Councils induction standards relating to employment in the social care sector. Staff either hold or are working towards a childcare qualification. Staff benefit from the range of frequent training opportunities. Such opportunities equip them with the skills and knowledge they need to promote good quality and safe care that meets the needs of all children and young people.

Regular staff supervision occurs and the manager has an open door policy so that staff feel free to present specific issues and seek guidance when needed. Team meetings take place regularly which allow the whole staff team to; discuss the running of the home; look at ways improve the service they offer; reflect young people's progress and how best to support them.

There is regular internal and external quality assurance monitoring of the home's practice. Monthly visits take place which focus on the home's strengths and weaknesses and highlight any areas for improvement. The views of children, young people and their families are routinely sought, as part of these processes. Any issues highlighted are followed up and lead to improvements in the service. These quality assurance inspections contribute to protecting children and young people as well as ensuring that the service provided is developing effectively.



## 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* and the evaluation schedule for the inspection of children's homes.