

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 to 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 **good**.

This short breaks service provides good quality care which is well planned and meets the needs of individual young people. Young people participate in their care and in the running of the service. Good relationships between staff and young people encourage positive behaviour.

Young people make good progress in achieving positive outcomes in all aspects of their lives. The home supports their progress in health, education and engagement in activities.

Young people are kept safe by staff who demonstrate a good understanding of safe working practice. The home has a range of policies and procedures to protect young people from harm. Behaviour is well managed and the use of sanctions and the need for restraint is rare.

The home is well managed and staff are experienced and receive good training and support, as a result of which they provide a good service for young people. There are two requirements made in relation to maintenance of the home and staff roles during fire drills. A recommendation is also made with regard to the storage and accessibility of records. These shortfalls do not significantly impact on the progress, welfare or safety of young people.

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
31 (2001)	ensure that all parts of the children's home used by children are of sound construction and kept in good structural repair externally and internally and are kept clean and reasonably decorated and maintained (Regulation 31(2)(d)(e))	07/11/2013
32 (2001)	ensure, by means of fire drills and practices at suitable intervals, that the persons working at the home and, so far as practicable, children accommodated there, are aware of the procedure to be followed in case of fire. (Regulation 32(1)(e))	07/11/2013

Recommendations

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

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

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people 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 that young people's social and emotional development has improved as a result of care received. Young people enjoy a range of activities that they would not usually have the opportunity to enjoy, including go-karting, archery, going to football matches, swimming and going to the cinema. Participating in these activities enable young people to interact with others and develop their social skills.

Young people benefit from a varied and healthy menu that provides a balanced diet and takes into account of their preferences and any specific dietary needs. Meals are home cooked from fresh ingredients. Young people are encouraged to sit together at meal times, which enhances their social interaction with others. Outdoor activities and exercise are encouraged in order to promote healthy living. Young people also benefit from relaxation time and activities such as nail painting which promote their emotional well-being and develop their self-esteem. Their health is further promoted by effective personal care and hygiene routines. As a result, young people enjoy good health.

Young people achieve well in their education and this is complemented by learning activities during their short break visits, such as use of money and the weighing and measuring of ingredients for baking. This helps young people achieve their educational potential.

Young people learn life skills such as cooking, making beds, clearing up and self-care skills that they might not have the opportunity to learn at home. Achievements are recognised and praised by staff and managers. This means young people learn skills appropriate to their age and understanding and learn to make decisions and choices.

Quality of care

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

Young people receive good quality care from an experienced and caring staff team. Short breaks are well planned and new young people are able to enjoy tea visits and family visits prior to their first overnight stay. The planning of the short breaks also includes parents and takes into account young people's individual needs of and their friendship groups.

Young people benefit from good short break care plans that identify their individual needs, likes and dislikes. Key workers identify targets for them to achieve and strategies to support their development. Young people's progress is reviewed regularly. Care plans and targets for the young people who are due to stay each night are reviewed at staff handover meetings, to inform activities and routines provided. This ensures young people are cared for in line with their individual plans.

Young people using the service have complex needs and many have communication difficulties. Staff use a variety of skills and methods of communication to enable young people to express their views despite these difficulties. Young people are able to participate in making choices about life in the home and their care through key work sessions, reviews and young people's meetings. As a result they are able to play an active role in their care and in the running of the home.

Young people enjoy very good relationships with staff and each other and this provides the foundation for positive behaviour in the home. Staff continue to develop their skills in communication methods in order to improve interaction and further enhance their relationships with young people. Young people 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. There have been no complaints from young people.

Staff encourage and support young people to access activities and leisure pursuits they would not normally have the opportunity to enjoy. These include activities in the local community as well as a range of exciting and challenging activities in the home such as go-karts and trikes. Various games and activities are provided in the home such as a pool table, computer, train sets and art and craft materials. Outside there is an adventure playground, providing a range of equipment and activities. This

means that young people enjoy a variety of new activities and experiences.

Young people benefit from good health care plans that ensure their health needs are met. Staff work closely with all medical professionals to ensure continuity in the health care of young people using the short break service. Staff are trained in the handling and administration of medication. Records of medication are detailed. There has been one occasion where a young person was given their medication at the wrong time of day. Staff immediately recognised the error and contacted their doctor for advice, who confirmed there was no cause for concern. This incident was thoroughly discussed by the manager and the staff involved and a record of the incident kept on their supervision file in line with the home's medication policy and procedure. All staff have been reminded about the administration of medication and this ensures staff implement safe medication practice and the health needs of young people are met.

Staff are proactive in supporting young people's educational attendance and achievement. Communication between education providers and the short breaks staff team is very good. Key workers visit the school and engage in class activities. This ensures continuity in young people's learning.

Young people benefit from a nurturing, family home environment. However there are a number of building maintenance issues which have not been dealt with. For example, one of the shower rooms has been out of use for several months, although there are other facilities available for young people. There has been major structural damage to one of the rooms which has resulted in the sensory room being closed off and one bedroom being out of use. The building has been extensively risk assessed and is safe to use. A number of additional toys and activities have been purchased and other rooms are being utilised to minimise the impact of the loss of the sensory room on young people. However, young people do not benefit from a well maintained home.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people have various learning disabilities and staff recognise that some aggressive behaviour may be evident due to their inability to communicate and the frustration that brings. It is therefore pivotal to the prevention of bullying that staff understand the communication needs of young people and employ constant observation of interactions. In addition bullying is discussed in young people's meetings and as a result young people are protected from bullying.

Young people interact positively with staff and positive behaviour is encouraged by giving lots of praise and frequent expressions of approval. This is supported by positive relationships between young people and staff. The use of sanctions is rare with two being used since the last inspection. One sanction involved the same method as used for the young person at school, ensuring a consistent approach to their behaviour. The other sanction was reviewed by the manager as inappropriate

as the young person had not been able to choose their favourite breakfast as a result of their behaviour. Although they still enjoyed a healthy breakfast which is on their 'likes' list it was not their favourite. The manager conducted a thorough debrief with the member of staff to ensure sanctions used are appropriate and relevant. Staff are trained in restraint and physical intervention but it is used as a last resort. One restraint has occurred since the last inspection, this was appropriate and well recorded. As a result young people interact positively with staff and each other and behave appropriately.

Young people are kept safe as a result of a range of robust procedures and protocols implemented by an experienced and well trained staff team. Young people are protected from unsuitable people gaining employment by a good recruitment process. Visitors to the home are asked to sign in and identification is checked. This further ensures young people are protected from significant harm. A range of proportionate risk assessments enables young people to experience new challenges and develop new skills whilst remaining safe. Young people are safeguarded by high levels of supervision and there have been no incidents of young people going missing from the home. Staff are aware of the procedures to follow should a young person be absent.

The home has very good policies and procedures for safeguarding practices in respect of child protection and handling allegations. Staff receive very good safeguarding training and are aware of new procedures and guidance to protect young people. Staff are clear about their role in the safeguarding process.

Young people live in a home that provides the appropriate level of security to ensure their safety and wellbeing. Regular fire, building and equipment checks further promote the safety of young people. Fire drills are held on a regular basis. Any issues identified during drills are highlighted. However, there is no evidence that action is taken to address these issues. For example, during a drill it was identified there were issues regarding staff communication and assignment of duties. It was recommended that this be discussed with staff and a further drill be performed within a three-month period however the next drill took place six months later and there was no record of the issues being discussed with staff. This means it is not evident that staff implement the learning from fire drill practice. However, all young people and staff have taken part in drills and evacuated the building as required and staff are trained in fire safety. This means young people are kept safe.

Leadership and management

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

The short breaks service is managed by an experienced and well qualified manager who is supported by a team of assistant managers. A social worker said, 'I have nothing but praise for staff, especially the managers, who I can ask for advice on matters not necessarily relating to a specific child but around their expertise.'

The service has a history of meeting requirements and addressing failures to meet

national standards. No requirements or recommendations were made at the last inspection. Two requirements and one recommendation are made as a result of this inspection. These are in relation to maintenance, staff learning from fire drills and the storage of records. However, these shortfalls do not significantly impact negatively on the welfare or safety of young people. There have been no complaints from young people or others since the last inspection and no concerns raised.

The home's statement of purpose is reviewed and updated regularly. The home also provides a comprehensive information pack for parents and a very good guide for young people. This means staff, parents, young people and other agencies are clear on the aims of the service and the facilities it provides.

Staff have a range of skills, are well qualified and have a variety of experiences and strengths to bring to the service. The staff rota ensures young people's needs are met through the provision of sufficient staffing. Staff receive a very good induction and have access to an extensive variety of training and development opportunities relevant to the needs of the young people using the service. External training is enhanced through in-house training on topics such as moving and handling. This enables the training to focus on individual young people who attend for short breaks. This means staff improve their competency in meeting the needs of young people.

Staff are supported through the provision of regular and good quality supervision and appraisals of their performance. Good use is made of team meetings as an environment for sharing information and good practice. In addition, staff use this time to continue to learn symbols and signs to improve their communication skills. This ensures the service provided to young people continues to be of good quality.

The home has good procedures for monitoring the quality of the service provided and the welfare of the young people. The registered provider undertakes visits to the home in accordance with regulations and carries out checks to ensure the quality of service remains good and the welfare of young people is monitored. The manager completes monthly checks and submits reviews of care to Ofsted as required. The manager and assistant managers are aware of the process to follow with regard to notification of significant events should the need arise. As a result the quality of care and the welfare and protection of young people is monitored.

A number of records are kept by the home. However, the storage facilities and the archiving of records means a number of old records are not easily accessible. This means staff are not able to easily review the past events or records relating to a young person once the manager has completed their monthly checks.

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.