

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	21/10/2013
Inspector	Cheryl Carter
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Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	07/03/2013
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This children's home is a purpose-built complex run by a registered charity in partnership with a local authority. The home provides short stay services to children and young people who have high support needs. The home is split into two units; it provides services for up to 12 children and young people at any one time.

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**.

Currently only one unit is open and providing short breaks for up to 6 children. The other unit is close while it undergoes a programme of refurbishment. The young people using this short breaks service have a wide and diverse range of complex needs, including communication difficulties, physical disabilities, learning disabilities and sensory impairments. The service provides a well-balanced, integrated, short break service whereby young people's personal, social and behavioural abilities are positively developed over time. Parents confirmed that their children enjoy their stay in a safe environment and staff are always concerned for their welfare. Young people and their parents have positive views about the quality of care in the home and their relationships with staff. Parents say that their children make good progress in many areas, such as developing various personal and social skills.

Staff communicate effectively with the young people, some who have difficulties communicating. The staff team is stable and qualified. They are well supported by qualified and experienced managers. The service is well resourced to cater for young people with very complex individual needs.

The strengths of the home are the commitment of the staff and the warm relationships and interactions between staff and young people. Young people appear happy and relaxed during their stay. Staff have detailed risk assessments and individual health and care plans for each young person. Young people enjoy short breaks in safe and secure surroundings.

To further improve, the service must ensure that regular drills should include fire drills carried out at night time as well as ensuring that Regulation 33 visits on behalf of the provider are completed according to the regulations. The lines of accountability must be clear and the home is in need of refurbishment. These shortfalls have not affected the quality of care for young people. Staff respond quickly to any realistic suggestions for improvements that maximise and increase opportunities for 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
33 (2001)	ensure that visits on behalf of the provider are completed in accordance with this regulation and copies of the reports are sent to Ofsted. (Regulation 33 (1) (5) (a))	06/12/2013
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. In particular, make arrangements to carry out night-time fire drills. (Regulation 32(e))	06/12/2013

Recommendations

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

- ensure that the home provides a comfortable and homely environment and that it is well maintained and decorated. Avoidable hazards are removed as is consistent with a domestic setting. Risk reduction does not lead to an institutional feel (NMS 10.3)
- ensure that staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities. The level of delegation and responsibility in the absence of the manager and staff, and the lines of accountability are clearly defined. (NMS 21.4)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people have a positive experience when accessing this service. They benefit

from having contact with peers in a social setting through mixing with other young people and adults outside of their family network. This offers young people the opportunity to develop a better understanding of interacting with others and how to form social relationships.

Young people's health care needs are well identified and met in accordance with their individualised care plans. Young people are encouraged to follow a healthy diet and participate in a range of games and activities which combine their sensory and physical needs with fun and relaxation. They have opportunities to visit the parks, go out for meals and various other places of interest.

Young people who have communication difficulties make good progress in developing their communication skills. They communicate with peers and staff through various methods, including picture exchange communication symbols. Young people are supported to attend school during their short breaks and benefit from effective help in learning various skills during their stays. For example, where appropriate young people are supported to take care of their personal hygiene and participate in simple tasks.

Children and young people are encouraged and supported to make day-to-day decisions about their lives and to influence the way the home is run. For example, efforts are made to consult them about their leisure activities, outings and menu planning.

Quality of care

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

The process of introducing young people to the home is carefully planned and agreed. Young people are assessed prior to being offered a placement and staff visit schools to gain a better understanding of how to work with the young people. Young people are assessed and individual care plans identify all their needs including cultural and religious needs. Care plans set out how these needs are met when a young person is accessing the short break service. This means that the quality of care children and young people receive is uninterrupted regardless of the change of environment.

Staff are attentive and show an interest in the children and young people. They are comfortable in staff company and listen to instructions and directions which are delivered in a kind and caring manner. One parent said, 'My son loves going there, they look after him very well and we feel very supported'. Parents spoken to were very positive about the home.

Staff encourage young people to undertake a range of independent living tasks by themselves. They are prompted verbally and demonstrations by staff help to encourage self-care skills. Young people who are keen to cook are assisted to do so and where appropriate young people help to clear up after meals.

Young people enjoy positive relationships with staff and peers. Staff are supported to communicate with young people who have communication difficulties. They have specialist training, and a range of resources are made available including Picture Exchange Communication Symbols. Effective communication and information allow young people to engage and build positive relationships. Interactions between staff and young people are very warm and genuine. Young people's views and wishes are listened to. They are consulted in various ways, mainly through one to one sessions with staff and staff periodically send questionnaires to young people and their parents to request feedback about the service they receive in the short breaks provision.

Education is well promoted. Young people are supported to attend school during their visit to the home. Young people are provided with computers and various learning aids to promote their education. A range of purposeful and enjoyable activities are provided in the service. Young people enjoy playing in the garden weather permitting and doing arts and crafts in the house. Young people also like watching television. Staff supervise young people with activities, and risk assessments are in place to ensure their safety. There is an appropriate complaints policy and procedure in place. Staff maintain a record of all complaints received from young people and their parents. Complaints are managed in accordance with the home's procedures.

The home is appropriately located. The premises are purpose built and wheelchair users have easy access. Community amenities are nearby and the home has good access to public transport. The accommodation offers a comfortable environment to young people. However part of the home is in need of refurbishment and repairs. Young people are protected from hazards by a range of detailed health and safety procedures and risk assessments. The staff team is organised to provide consistency and continuity of care. Managers ensure that there is always sufficient staff on shift that would meet the needs of young people accessing the service each day. This means that there is flexibility to the number of staff on shift depending on the needs of the young people. Arrangements for dealing with medication and supporting children and young people with varying feeding regimes are regularly reviewed.

The staff team demonstrate a good understanding of children and young people's behaviour and how to manage this. Staff know the triggers and work in accordance with the behaviour management plans and risk assessments. Risk assessments are reviewed to accurately reflect the level of support a young person requires. However this is not routinely audited, and this could lead, for example, to errors in medication going undetected.

Shift and handover meetings provide up-to-date information to staff prior to young people attending the short break. This gives staff the opportunity to be clear about tasks delegated to them, the activities planned for that day and the required support.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people are protected from harm. They can talk to staff and other adults if they have any worries. The home has safe care policies and practices that give young people's safety the highest priority. Staff are trained in safeguarding and are able to recognise the signs and symptoms of abuse, including issues in relation to young people's personal circumstances, disability and communication needs; they know exactly what they need to do to protect young people.

Young people's individual plans and risk assessments clearly identify any risks they may face and outline suitable strategies to ensure their welfare is protected. Staff ensure plans for young people's safety are consistently put into practice and fully address young people's needs. The security arrangements and the level of staffing in the home ensures that no young person goes missing from the home. Nevertheless the home has clear policies in place and staff know what to do should a young person go missing from the home.

There have not been any incidents of bullying, however, the home has the appropriate procedures in place relating to bullying and staff training promotes a safe environment for all children.

The home does not use restraint or sanctions to gain compliance from young people. Incident records demonstrate that staff use de-escalation and distraction techniques to manage challenging behaviour. Staff have been trained in these techniques to good effect. Positive behaviour strategies are in place to manage challenging behaviour and staff have specific guidance, often supported by schools to mirror the management of behaviour that is understood by young people.

Health and safety routines do not fully promote the safety of young people. Staff ensure that fire drills are regularly undertaken. However, there are no records of night time fire evacuations that have been undertaken in the home. The home has had a recent fire safety inspection by the London Fire Authority and some shortfalls were identified, these are currently being addressed. Effective maintenance systems ensure the home remains safe for young people and visitors.

Leadership and management

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

Young people benefit from a Registered Manager and staff team who are focused on improving the quality of care provided and demonstrate a capacity for continual improvement.

Requirements and recommendations from the previous inspection have been acted upon. The restraint log book has been amended and includes relevant information that informs if the young person has sustained any injury or whether they had been given opportunity to raise any concerns. There is an up-to-date training matrix, and the information relating to the recruitment of the staff that demonstrates good practice. The names of all the staff and children participating in fire drills are now recorded.

The home has a well written Statement of Purpose that reflects its practice and function. Children, young people, parents, staff and the placing authority are clear about the aims and objectives of the home. The children's guide has been developed in an accessible format for the young people who use alternative methods of communication. The guide is appropriate to the young people's level of understanding and familiarises young people with the environment.

The commitment to promoting equality and diversity is explicit in this information. Staff provide a service tailored to meet the specific individual needs of young people that takes into account all aspects of diversity. Staff are well equipped to meet young people's holistic needs. Staff encourage and support young people to make personal choices and to access community resources.

The monitoring visits on behalf of the provider are not routinely completed and sent to Ofsted. This could mean shortfalls in the care of the young people are not being recognised by the home and areas for improvement not being addressed. Leaders and managers understand the strengths of the home and there is a business plan that ensures the continual improvement of the service. The registered manager assesses the quality of care through effectively monitoring the matters they are required to.

The staff team are enthusiastic about their work and they know the young people well. They work together and provide young people with consistent care. Staff undertake a detailed induction which provides them with the competencies required to meet the complex needs of the young people. They also receive training which enhances their individual skills. Staff are complimentary about the quality and types of training they receive because it is relevant to their work with individual young people. Most of the staff team have completed their National Vocational Qualification at level 3. Staff receive support and guidance through regular supervision and team meetings. As a result staff have opportunities to regularly reflect, with a manager, on their practice, performance and development, the running of the home and young people's progress.

Young people's files are stored securely and contain documents, which are relevant and contribute to an understanding of the young people's stay at the home. The management team uses the inspection process to further enhance the quality of care provided. Notifications of significant events have been sent to Ofsted.

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.