

Inspection report for children's home

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| Inspector | Anna Williams |
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This children's home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to 16 children and young people who have a learning disability. The service is privately owned. A respite/short break service is provided. Young people may stay in the home on an independence programme until the age of 25.

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 children's home offers children an overall good standard of care. Children's unique needs are identified within highly comprehensive care plans. Staff review individual plans on a regular basis to ensure they remain relevant. Staff knowledge of children's personal care plans is excellent. Transitions into the home are carefully and effectively planned according to each child's needs. Outcomes for children who live in the home, or who visit regularly, are outstanding. Children are positively involved in the local community and benefit from the wide-ranging activity choices on offer. Independence and life skills progress is particularly good and a strength of the home. Children's physical and emotional healthcare needs are clearly identified and fully met. All children, whether part of a short break package of care, or living at the home permanently, make exceptional progress across all areas of their lives. Diversity is well-celebrated.

Children are extremely positive about the staff and care they receive. Children's views are regularly sought and acted upon in the day-to-day running of the home. Relationships between the children and staff are warm and appropriate. Children feel safe and are safe in the home. Feedback from parents and placing social workers is overwhelmingly positive.

The restraint log and incident records do not currently capture all the required information as detailed within regulations. This negatively affects the manager's ability to monitor for patterns and trends. Some staff commence work for the home prior to their references being verified by telephone. This compromises otherwise

robust recruitment practice. Documents kept are generally excellent. However, the record-keeping regarding a series of recent significant incidents is not clear. This includes how and when relevant information was shared with a placing authority. Appropriate action was taken to address the shortfall in records during the inspection. There has been one breach of the 'privacy and confidentiality' policy. However, there has been no review of the policy since the incident. This does not demonstrate learning and reflection after a data protection breach.

There is a manager in post. She has an application to become Registered Manager progressing with Ofsted currently. The manager offers the home stable and consistent leadership. The current business plan identifies areas for development for the children's home and also future adult transition services. These goals and targets identify the strengths and development areas of the home. Progress towards the plan is good. The one regulatory breach does not impact negatively on the welfare of children.

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 |
|---------------|---|------------|
| 17B (2001) | ensure the written record of any measure of control used is made in a volume kept for the purpose and contains all required information. (Regulation 17B 3(h)&(i) and 4(b)) | 21/10/2013 |

Recommendations

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

- ensure that telephone enquiries are made as well as obtaining written references, prior to staff commencing duties (NMS 16.1)
- ensure staff follow the home's policy for the keeping and retention of files, managing confidential information, and access to files (including files removed from the premises) (NMS 22.1)
- ensure the registered person works with the responsible authority to ensure effective sharing of information held in the home's records about the child and information held in the responsible authorities records. (NMS 22.7)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **outstanding**.

Children enjoy spending time with their key-worker. During these regular sessions, children discuss their feelings and talk about what they want to. This gives children regular opportunities to reflect on their current situations and build emotional resilience. Children are very positive about living in the home. This comment was received from a child, 'I like living with my housemate.' A parent stated, 'My child is always happy to go for the short break and always has a good time.' All children are making outstanding progress across all aspects of their lives. A placing social stated, 'This child has made significant progress in their communication. This benefits the child in all aspects of their life.'

Children maintain contact with their family and friends. This includes regular internet video contact sessions using Skype. A child said, 'I like going to see my family every week.' Staff suitably support contact arrangements, whether at the home or out in the community. This ensures that children maintain attachments with those important to them. The children who visit on short breaks make and build friendships with other children. This is positive for personal and social development. Children engage consistently with educational establishments and attendance is exceptional. Progress made by children is vast considering their starting points on placement. One child said, 'I like going to see my new school and school friends.'

Children are positively and actively involved in the local community. They benefit from the wide-ranging choice of activities on offer, allowing children to build confidence and try new experiences or activities. One parent commented, 'This placement has proved to be really beneficial for getting my child out and about more in the community.' Comments from children include, 'I like to go to fitness classes and splash dance disco,' and 'I had never been camping until I came here.' Children visit different areas of the country through holidays away together.

Children are active participants in keeping themselves fit and healthy through physical exercise and as a result have lost weight appropriately since coming to live at the home. A parent commented, 'My child is much more physically active now.' Through trying new and more varied foods, some children now have a more balanced diet, improving their physical health. Some children's sleep patterns have been positively altered which benefits their overall health and well-being. Through structured self-care programmes children have been able to improve their personal hygiene and washing skills. This approach benefits children's health and development now and in the future.

Some children develop leadership and team working skills through engaging with opportunities such as running the 'tuck shop'. This aids their personal growth and allows them responsibility. Children learn new skills. One child commented, 'I am 14, but have done laundry and cooking.' Children successfully follow the house recipe files which reflect the menus on offer. They learn and help to prepare meals for the houses with appropriate support and supervision. This includes using fresh produce handpicked from the house gardens. Children are extremely well prepared for

adulthood as appropriate to their age and understanding.

Quality of care

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

Transition arrangements are extremely sensitive to the individual needs of the child coming to live permanently in the home. Consideration is carefully given to children who already live in the home and how they are prepared for change too. Children write letters to each other, and exchange photographs during the initial transition stages. Dependant on the individual needs of the child, visits to the home then take place where the child can meet staff and peers and see their new home. This builds positive relationships between children and staff from the start of the placement.

Children receiving a short break service also have exceedingly individualised transitions as described. Each subsequent respite stay is carefully planned. Each subsequent stay is carefully planned. This includes the presentation of the short break bedroom with photographs of the child, family and friends, their toys and other items which the child has chosen themselves. This reduces anxiety and creates a familiar and homely space for each child at every visit.

Children know how to complain. The views of children are sought on a regular basis through individually designed and creative means. Every child contributes their views and feelings on living and staying at the home. Regular residents' meetings take place and their engagement is very good. Examples of action taken following meetings include activity choices, bedroom colours, holiday plans and menu discussions. Children also complete feedback forms on the care they receive in the home. This feeds into the overall development plan for the home. Key-workers spend time with children discussing progress towards their current goals. A placing social worker said, 'Choice is part of the ethos here. Children are supported to make their views known and are listened to.' Children's wishes and feelings are regularly sought, recorded clearly and consistently acted upon. This demonstrates to children that their views are important and highly-valued.

Children's care plans are extremely comprehensive documents. Staff knowledge of individual plans is outstanding. One placing social worker said, 'The carers are very consistent, and every staff member knows the individual needs of the child placed in detail.' Children are supported to take part in their review meetings. This ensures children are fully and actively involved in the planning and review of their care.

Children are involved in creating activity planners. They visually outline activities and trips for the week ahead. These plans are followed and children have access to a considerable range of leisure activities that they enjoy. One child said, 'I love all my activities.' All children benefit positively from the wide-ranging experiences on offer such as camping, trampoline club, visits to local places of interest and fitness clubs, such as Zumba classes. This supports excellent personal development.

Staff actively and successfully support and celebrate academic achievement. They

undertake on-going observations of children in school. This aids staff in understanding a child's current academic and learning needs. It also builds relationships with local schools and learning establishments, ensuring a consistent approach. This is effective at addressing challenges to educational achievement and attendance.

Arrangements for the administration and storage of medication are safe and effective. Children learn about and are encouraged to maintain a healthy, active lifestyle. Access to specialist services such as child and adolescent mental health services is suitably facilitated by the home. This ensures children's physical and emotional health needs are identified and fully met.

Children's background and identity are clearly identified within daily living plans. Staff knowledge of each individual child's specific circumstances and heritage is extremely good. Children learn about different countries and cultures through themed nights. Scottish and Chinese events have recently taken place. This inspires debate, activities and celebration around cultural diversity.

The accommodation is presented and maintained to an excellent standard throughout. The home is located within a rural location. The home has vehicles which allow children regular opportunities to safely visit the local village and larger nearby town facilities. The design of the accommodation is suitable for the needs of the children. There are extensive grounds which offer safe spaces for children to unwind, play and explore. The on site swimming pool is a valuable and well-used resource. Children are supported to grow flowers, vegetables and herbs in the gardens. Children personalise their bedroom space with photographs and posters. Their colourful artwork is celebrated on the walls around the houses. A placing social worker said, 'I feel the superb facilities available on site, and the homely environment benefit my child greatly. My child is happy and relaxed in their home.' Children are provided with an environment in which they can be at ease, feel comfortable and be safe.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Children consistently say they feel safe in the home. Bullying is not identified as an issue within the home. High staffing levels and close supervision ensure that any targeting or negative behaviour towards others is calmly and promptly addressed. This creates a friendly and harmonious atmosphere to live and stay in. The staff demonstrate a good knowledge of safeguarding procedures.

The highly individualised care plans contain extensive risk assessments. They clearly identify risk factors for each child. Staff knowledge of risk assessments is good. They implement and regularly review the strategies to minimise risk. This proactive cycle of monitoring and review helps protect children.

Staff are subject to appropriate vetting procedures. However, the verification of

written references by telephone for some staff has taken place after they have started work. This compromises otherwise robust recruitment procedures.

No children have been missing from the home since the last inspection. Suitable protocols are place to minimise the risk to children if they were to be reported missing. These procedures have been shared with, and agreed by, the local police. Significant events relating to the safety and welfare of children are appropriately shared with relevant parties. This demonstrates good multi-agency partnership working.

The home does not use sanctions. Positive behaviour is praised and rewarded. The staff record all incidents of physical intervention and restraint in a transparent manner. Records show that there have been 112 recorded interventions since the last inspection. The majority of interventions detailed are low-level, for example a block technique, or a hair pull or bite release and are very brief in duration. These events are captured within a bound log and loose incident report forms. However, within the two documents the full information as required by regulation is not captured. For example, staff confirm they are spoken to after a restraint but this is not formally written down. The child's debrief and methods used to avoid the use of restraint are not clearly or consistently recorded. This compromises the manager's ability to effectively monitor and evaluate these records.

Children are protected by good health and safety routines. Maintenance issues are promptly addressed. Regular gas, fire and electrical checks take place at appropriate intervals. Children know what to do in an emergency through regular fire drills. This provides children with a physically safe environment to live in.

Leadership and management

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

The manager in post has submitted an application to become the Registered Manager within the required timescales. The application is progressing. She has been the manager since the last inspection which offers the home stable leadership and direction. The Statement of Purpose describes in good detail the facilities and services available to children at the home. Children's guides are created on an individual basis ensuring that information is tailored to each child and presented in their preferred communication method. The Statement of Purpose and children's guide contain all required information. This ensures that children, placing social workers and parents are clear about the aims and objectives of the home.

There have been four complaints since the last inspection. Clear records demonstrate the actions taken in response to each complaint. The provider organisation has taken suitable action in addressing and learning from each complaint.

Staff speak positively of the manager and senior management team. They feel well-supported and listened to. All staff, including night staff and bank workers, receive regular high quality supervision and appraisal. This effective performance

management system ensures a consistent standard of care. 81% of staff have an appropriate childcare qualification. The remaining staff are completing induction standards within their probationary period. The individual learning and development needs of staff are identified and fully met, and appropriately refreshed. Training since the last inspection has included, 'healthy eating and dietary needs', 'overcoming communication barriers' and 'puberty and sexuality'. Recently, the organisation has sourced training to meet the specific needs of a new referral. This benefits children as staff are highly skilled in meeting their unique needs and are up to date with their care practice.

Children's records capture their time at the home in words, photographs, mementos and drawings. Children are encouraged to, and do, add their own words, pictures and views to their records. This positively involves children in their care and life story work. A parent said, 'We always receive feedback and photos of what my child has done, which is lovely.' Files clearly evidence the significant progress children make while at the home. House documents are generally detailed, clear and up-to-date. However, a series of recent significant events and subsequent actions taken is not clearly recorded. There is not a clear timeline of how and when information is shared and received from a placing authority. Appropriate action was taken to address this shortfall during the inspection.

The majority of records are paper-based. They are stored securely with the individual houses on the site. However, there has been one breach of the 'privacy and confidentiality' policy relating to children's information held on a digital data stick belonging to the organisation. One data stick had been lost. However, there has not been a review of the relevant policy following this serious data protection breach. This does not demonstrate a robust response to avoid a similar breach occurring again.

Internal monitoring visits take place on a monthly basis. They involve children and identify suitable areas for improvement. Management monitoring systems are strong. They include effective scrutiny and evaluation of key outcome areas for children such as education, health, accidents and incidents, and children's care plans. From this evaluation and feedback from children and key stakeholders; an action plan to address identified shortfalls is created. This drives forward improved outcomes for children.

There were no requirements or recommendations set at the last interim inspection. Since the last full inspection, the home has consistently maintained an excellent quality of care and exceptional outcomes for children. The home has a business plan in place. This focuses on development targets for both the children's home and future adult transition services. Progress towards targets is good. These include the organisation being officially certified through an awarding body as a learning centre in June 2013. This further enhances already good training opportunities available for staff.

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.