

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Jackie Graves
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home is registered for five children with learning disabilities and physical disability, but does not have facilities for wheelchair users. There are three short break places and two long term placements. The home is operated by a private company. The short break aspect of the service generally operates between Friday and Monday and in school holidays.

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**.

Since the last inspection, the short break service has varied its conditions of registration to accept up to two children long term. Another change is that a new manager is appointed and is working alongside the Registered Manager to ensure a gradual handover and so limit disruption to children and staff. An independent reviewing officer commented that the service 'appeared to be well run and child focused.'

The home provides children with a good quality of care so they enjoy their short break or long-term stay in the home. Families value the service and appreciate that staff keep them informed of their children's wellbeing and progress. A parent commented: 'My child really loves his stay at the home; when we arrive he can't wait to get out of the car and enter the home. I can leave feeling totally reassured he is in very good hands and will be very happy.'

Families trust the staff to keep their children safe; no incidents of children going missing, or notifiable events, have occurred since the last inspection. A very thorough recruitment process helps ensure that only suitable people are employed to work with children which promotes their safety. A parent says the home is, 'Very good at knowing how to handle children with great challenges - keep her safe.'

Staff are calm, warm and nurturing in their approach to the children they look after. They take care to respect children's privacy; they get to know their behaviour,

routines and interests very well. Staff are good at recognising what children may be trying to communicate through their behaviour, including those children who are non-verbal. A highly effective system of risk assessing behaviour helps staff to manage children's behaviour well. They work in a child centred way to help children feel settled and secure.

In surveys, staff 'strongly agree' that the home continually strives to improve the service, with one staff member saying, 'We are encouraged to voice opinions and ideas to improve the services we provide.'

The home is well maintained and comfortable. A parent said: 'It's an enabling environment, very clean, has respectful, friendly and welcoming staff, they make my child feel so much at home and they understand and meet their needs.' There is a good approach to fire safety, with evacuation plans geared to each individual. Access to a room in the roof space is not secure. However, this has not presented a risk to children due to high staff supervision.

Management monitoring of the service has identified the quality of record keeping as an issue to address and training is identified to improve this. Some records relating to health, medication and fridge temperature checks vary in quality and records of restraint are not in an appropriate format. Management seeks the views of all those using the home, but these views are not yet incorporated into the Registered Manager's review of the service.

The service is considering plans to develop the home, particularly expanding to the premises next door to improve the facilities available to children. However, it does not yet have a written development plan.

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 all parts of the home to which children have access are so far as reasonably practicable free from hazards to their safety, with particular reference to making sure the doors to the room in the roof space are secure (Regulation 23 (a))	01/12/2013
34 (2001)	ensure the system referred to in paragraph (1) shall provide for consultation with children accommodated in the home, their parents and placing authorities. (Regulation 34 (3))	01/12/2013

Recommendations

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

- ensure that records of restraint are in formats that cannot be tampered with after the event, for example in bound numbered records or electronic entries that are then 'barred' so that they cannot be amended at a later date (Volume 5, statutory guidance paragraph 2.91)
- ensure the registered person has a written development plan, reviewed annually, for the future of the home, either identifying any planned changes in the operation or resources of the service, or confirming the continuation of the home's current operation and resource (NMS 15.2)
- ensure the manager regularly monitors, in line with regulations, all records kept by the home to ensure compliance with the home's policies, with particular reference to ensuring health records are collated in one place on the child's file, medication records are clear and that fridge and temperature checks are maintained consistently. (NMS 21.2)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Some parents find a significant improvement in their children's general wellbeing as a result of their stay in the home. Examples of the outcomes for children are: being more tolerant of being touched; participating in activities in the local community, from previously not venturing out of their room; becoming increasingly emotionally secure when living in a new environment; and starting to interact with others or better tolerating others around them in small ways.

Children experience activities they like; they feel secure in the repetition of these. They participate in activities both in the home and in the local community, for example, shopping trips, visits to a sensory centre and walks to the park. A parent said, 'He loves going out a lot and this is what happens.'

Some children make some improvement by reducing the frequency of their challenging behaviour; for example, some modify their self-harming behaviour and some have fewer incidents of extremely challenging behaviour. Some parents find their children respond to 'setting boundaries', showing improvement in understanding these and consequently improving their behaviour.

Those children living in the home have very good school attendance, thus optimising their educational opportunities.

Some children experience the stability of living a settled life after a number of placement moves as they live in a home where staff do not give up on them but explore the reasons why their behaviour may be extremely challenging at times.

Children's health is maintained and for some, their levels of activity improve, with more frequent exercise outdoors. A parent said, 'Get enough exercise - go out and about - not a lot of sitting around.' Those children living in the home benefit from the experience of attending health appointments, such as to the dentist or general practitioner, with both their families and the home's staff to support and reassure them to maintain their health.

Those children attending the service for only a short time tend not to be in contact with families, although may do so if they wish. Those children living in the home experience the reassurance of regular communication with their families. As a result of the good progress some have made in the home, the possibility of home visits are considered, which is a really good outcome for both children and their families.

Children are making some progress in small ways to develop the things they can do for themselves, according to their needs and ability. For example, some help at mealtimes by clearing the table or laying their personalised place mats on the table or helping with their own personal care, which also helps their self-esteem.

Quality of care

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

A parent commented on the quality of care: 'They strive to make each child's stay really happy and enjoyable, making sure they suit their individual needs. All aspects are taken into consideration e.g. food, activities, choice of room.' Staff acknowledge children's needs regarding their ethnic, religious and cultural backgrounds, for example, by incorporating specific foods into menu planning or considering how children might access places of worship.

There is strong support to secure positive educational outcomes for children. Children attend school regularly and their learning continues in the home, for example, by trying new art and craft activities, cooking or listening to stories.

The home works effectively with families and the professionals involved in children's lives. For example, parents say that staff attend health appointments with them and their child so they all can support the child and be informed of their health needs. Staff keep families informed of children's welfare, for example, by producing useful individual newsletters for each child with pictures of them involved in activities.

Staff contribute effectively to the care planning and review process which is tailored to each individual child. An independent reviewing officer commented, 'The representative for the statutory review was well informed and able to answer questions for the review.'

Due to the children's needs, bullying is not an issue in the home. Staff find that children are mostly content for others to be around them. However, staff are mindful that one child's behaviour may impact on another and try to ensure that children have personal space to do their own activity when required. In surveys, staff say that

they 'agree' or 'strongly agree' that children's needs are met at all times. Most staff agree that the home ensures that the group of children who attend on any given day have compatible needs; one staff member says that although not all children may be compatible, 'Each child's needs are supported. I think this therefore makes it easier for children to be compatible.'

Health needs are well supported. Children have a varied diet, with consideration given to their favourite foods. Staff work with parents on any dietary issues affecting health. Children are encouraged to be active, keep clean and get enough sleep. Medication arrangements are sound and closely overseen by management. However, some entries in medication records are not sufficiently clear. A health information 'passport' is being developed so that all health information will be contained in one place. In the meantime, health information is recorded in various records, but is not collated in one place on children's files.

The home welcomes complaints and suggestions for improvement. Levels of complaints are very low with only one complaint since the last inspection and none from children; most children would be reliant on their parents or carers to make a complaint on their behalf. In surveys, parents were asked what the staff could do better. Few suggestions were made for improvement, with one saying, 'They should just keep up the good work and maintain the quality standard they already have,' and another saying, 'I have not come across anything that needs improving.' One parent suggested the garden could be made more child friendly, for example, with grass and further facilities and another suggested that informing parents if their children would be returning late from a trip would be useful.

Children's views contribute to how the home runs, for example, in the choice of activities, meals, or when they wish to take a shower. They are supported to help staff with everyday activities, for example, helping with shopping by the use of picture cards to help them find items to fill a basket or a trolley with food or preparing a meal.

Equality and diversity issues are identified on children's files. A diverse staff team of both genders supports children's identity needs, for example, in relation to religion, diet or gender. The home ensures that children can access facilities in the community irrespective of their disability. A member of staff said, 'Everyone has the right to be respected and be treated with respect.'

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Parents say the home is very effective in keeping their children safe when they are in the home or out in the community. High staff supervision levels, which are adjusted to take into consideration children's current behaviour and moods, have ensured that no children have run away from staff or gone missing. Appropriate steps are taken to keep extremely vulnerable children safe in the home, including securing the front door, which placing authorities and parents agree with.

The home uses an efficient and simple system to identify risks to children and to anticipate and manage their highly challenging behaviour. Where there is no apparent antecedent to some behaviour, staff observe children and try to understand what the trigger may be. The staff set effective boundaries and are positive and nurturing in their management of children. Restraints tend to be low key, such as moving a child away to a place where they may calm down. Staff keep records of all physical interventions. However, these records are on loose sheets of paper and thus are not tamper proof.

The home follows a very thorough recruitment process to try to ensure that only suitable people are employed to work with children. In some aspects, this process exceeds minimum standards, for example, by obtaining three references rather than two, to confirm a person's suitability and testing applicant's ability in maths and literacy. To further ensure that people 'have what it takes', they are invited to 'shadow' a shift with experienced staff so their interaction with children and children's response to them is observed and taken into consideration in finalising the recruitment procedure.

No child protection allegations or referrals have been made at the home since the last inspection. Staff are trained so they know how to respond, in order to protect children, should they have any concerns or receive an allegation. In surveys, staff say they feel confident about dealing with child protection concerns, with one saying they feel confident 'now that I have completed my training'. The home takes advantage of training provided by the Local Children's Safeguarding Board to ensure its staff have up-to-date knowledge.

Leadership and management

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

Since the last inspection, an acting manager has been appointed; they are easing into the role alongside the Registered Manager to ensure a smooth transition until the Registered Manager resigns and the acting manager applies to Ofsted for registration. The acting manager is credited with introducing new systems which are embedding into the home, for example, the management team now complete daily checklists to ensure tasks are not overlooked.

Children and families receive a service in line with the home's Statement of Purpose, which is regularly reviewed to ensure it remains current. There are plans to develop the company and the range of services it provides as well as the possibility of extending the premises to provide further resources for children. However, these plans are not currently incorporated into a written development plan.

Staff say they have sufficient support and training to help them in their work with children. In surveys, staff say that management listen to them and incorporate their ideas; one staff member says, 'Our monthly team meeting is a good forum for this. We also have access to duty managers at all times.' Staff 'strongly agree' that their

training needs are identified and met and that supervision helps them do their job, with one saying, 'Not only did my supervision help me to do my job, but it also highlighted areas for further training and personal and professional development.'

A range of suitable training is provided to staff to help them meet children's particular individual needs, for example, in autism awareness, epilepsy and an appropriate means of restraining children who may have very challenging behaviour and learning disabilities. Those staff who have not yet attained the recommended vocational qualification are working towards achieving this. A parent said, 'The staff at the home are very caring and well qualified. It is an excellent short break provision.'

Only one member of staff has left since the last inspection, providing stability to those children and families using the service. Twelve new staff have joined the home as a result of the home changing its conditions of registration in order to accommodate two children long term, as well as expansion of the company into other areas of work. They represent diverse backgrounds with varied experience of learning disability. Management identify that successful team work is essential and monitor and support the development of the expanding staff group.

Regular visits by the responsible individual check what is going on in the home. Reports of their monitoring are shared with Ofsted so the regulator is kept informed. Monitoring visits have highlighted that record keeping is weak and that staff need support to develop their report writing skills.

The Registered Manager also monitors what goes on in the home to improve the quality of care. Although the home generally seeks feedback from people involved with the service, to help improve the provision, the manager's review of the home does not include consultation with children, parents and placing authorities as required by regulation.

The home is well maintained to provide a safe premises for children to live in, for example, with regular checks of electrical and gas systems and fire equipment. Regular risk assessment of the premises help to promote safety. However, children's potential access to a room in the loft space in one bedroom is not included in the assessment of risk. The risk is mitigated by close staff supervision of children and has not directly affected any child.

Management has appropriately addressed the one recommendation made at the last inspection, indicating the home's capacity to improve. Individual personal emergency evacuation plans have been devised that all staff and children are familiar with. This improves the potential to keep children safe in the event of an emergency.

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.