

West Sussex County Council

Fun and Breaks(Mid Sussex, Crawley and Horsham)

Inspection report

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Ratings

Overall rating for this service

Good 

Is the service safe?

Good 

Is the service effective?

Good 

Is the service caring?

Good 

Is the service responsive?

Good 

Is the service well-led?

Good 

Overall summary

The inspection took place on 6 January 2015 and was an announced inspection.

The Fun and Breaks (FAB) service provides short breaks for children and young people with a range of disabilities, for example, autism, physical and/or learning disability and communication difficulties, from birth to the age of 18 years. The service is for disabled children who are in receipt of middle or high rate Disability Living Allowance. Disability Living Allowance (DLA) is money for children who have care needs or mobility needs. It is run by West

Sussex County Council and receives additional funding from government. Volunteers are recruited to provide support for children either at their family home or out in the community. They will volunteer for at least two hours per week and, apart from expenses, are unpaid. Volunteers are trained by the service. The short breaks provided to children or young people enables families to spend time together away from the child, for example, as

Summary of findings

a couple or with their other children. Additionally, it enables the child to become more independent and confident as they are supported by their volunteer in the community.

The service had a registered manager. A registered manager is a person who has registered with the Care Quality Commission to manage the service. Like registered providers, they are 'registered persons'. Registered persons have legal responsibility for meeting the requirements in the Health and Social Care Act 2008 and associated Regulations about how the service is run.

Relatives felt their family members were safe as they were supported by volunteers on a short break. Risks were assessed so that volunteers knew how to look after children and young people. Any accidents or incidents were reported formally through the completion of diary sheets after every short break. Volunteers knew about safeguarding procedures, what to do if they suspected abuse was happening and had received child protection training. Safe recruitments practices were followed and all necessary checks had been undertaken when new volunteers were recruited, to ensure they were safe to work with children and young people. Volunteers carried information about the child they supported when they were out in the community. This enabled them to share vital information to be shared with the emergency services, should this be required. Volunteers did not administer medicines as this was not their responsibility.

Volunteers were carefully matched with families, children and young people. The service established the preferences, likes and dislikes of the child or young person and then looked at the profile of new volunteers to see who would work best together. When volunteers were matched with families, they agreed together the number of hours' support and when it would be convenient to have a short break. Volunteers received training as part of their induction programme and this was refreshed annually. They received regular one to one meetings throughout the year from the registered

manager, either face to face, by 'phone or through email. The registered manager had also received training that was relevant to her role. Consent to care was provided by family carers, since the children and young people using the service, were under the age of consent.

Positive, caring relationships had been developed between the volunteers, the children or young people and their families. These relationships were developed slowly so that people had time to get to know each other. The child or young person was part of the process and they made choices about how they wanted to spend the time with their volunteer.

Short breaks were organised either in the family home or outside in the community. Children and young people were interested in being supported in a variety of activities, for example, visiting a garden centre to see the animals, attending a karate class or having a meal at McDonalds. Volunteers' interests and hobbies were matched with the interests of the child. Care plans were drawn up that provided information about the child to enable the volunteer to deliver appropriate support. These plans were reviewed regularly with families. Complaints were dealt with in line with the provider's policy and addressed promptly. No formal complaints had been made recently.

The registered manager had sent out questionnaires to families, children and young people. Feedback was positive and the results had been analysed and outcomes acted upon. The service sent out a newsletter every six months which provided updates about the service and useful contacts. Events were held for volunteers to thank them for their contribution; events were held for parents and carers too. Steering groups were organised where volunteers, parents and carers could feedback any issues to local authority representatives. Registered managers from the other FAB schemes in the county met regularly and the service worked in partnership with relevant professionals, organisations and charities.

Summary of findings

The five questions we ask about services and what we found

We always ask the following five questions of services.

Is the service safe?

The service was safe.

Relatives felt their family members were supported and kept safe by volunteers who knew them well. Risks to people were assessed and volunteers knew what action to take in the event of an emergency.

Volunteers received child protection training and knew how to report any suspected abuse.

Volunteers did not administer medicines.

Good



Is the service effective?

The service was effective.

Children and young people, together with their families, were matched carefully with new volunteers.

Consent to participate in the Fun and Breaks service was obtained from families.

Volunteers received appropriate training from the registered manager and other outside organisations. They received regular supervision from the registered manager throughout the year.

Good



Is the service caring?

The service was caring.

The process of supporting new volunteers and meeting with families, children and young people was carefully planned. They got to know each other over time.

Families, together with children or young people, could choose how they wanted to spend time with their volunteer.

Good



Is the service responsive?

The service was responsive.

Short breaks took place either in the family home or out in the community.

Care plans provided detailed information for volunteers about the child or young person they supported. These were reviewed on a regular basis and at least once a year.

People knew how to make a complaint and the service followed the local authority's complaints procedure.

Good



Is the service well-led?

The service was well led.

Children, young people and their families, and volunteers were asked for their feedback about the service.

The service produced a newsletter every six months to keep people informed about what was happening.

Good



Summary of findings

The registered manager produced a report that analysed the results of feedback obtained and on the effectiveness of the service.

Fun and Breaks(Mid Sussex, Crawley and Horsham)

Detailed findings

Background to this inspection

We carried out this inspection under Section 60 of the Health and Social Care Act 2008 as part of our regulatory functions. This inspection checked whether the provider is meeting the legal requirements and regulations associated with the Health and Social Care Act 2008, to look at the overall quality of the service, and to provide a rating for the service under the Care Act 2014.

The inspection took place on 6 January 2015 and was announced. The provider was given 48 hours' notice because the location provides a short break service for children and young people; we needed to be sure that the registered manager would be available to speak with us.

One inspector undertook this inspection.

Before the inspection, the provider completed a Provider Information Return (PIR). This is a form that asks the provider to give some key information about the service, what the service does well and improvements they plan to make. We checked the information that we held about the service and the service provider. This included previous

inspection reports and statutory notifications sent to us by the registered manager about incidents and events that had occurred at the service. A notification is information about important events which the service is required to send to us by law. We used all the information to decide which areas to focus on during our inspection.

We spoke with volunteers and staff. We also spent time looking at records including three care records, three volunteer files, training records and other records relating to the management of the service. We contacted local health and social care professionals and a school teacher who have involvement with the service, to ask for their views.

On the day of our inspection we met with the registered manager (area co-ordinator) and one volunteer. After the inspection we spoke with another volunteer and one relative whose child used the service. We received feedback from a social care professional.

The service was previously inspected on 4 November 2013 and there were no concerns.

Is the service safe?

Our findings

Relatives felt their children and young people were safe when they received support from the Fun and Breaks (FAB) service. Volunteers provided constant supervision to the child or young person during the short break. One relative said, “I don’t think anything’s not gone smoothly” and said their volunteer knew how to look after their son. For example, she said that the volunteer knew which playground equipment her son would be safe to use. Volunteers received equality and diversity training and had a good understanding of the rights of children.

Risks to individuals and the service were managed so that people were protected. Volunteers reported any accidents or incidents that occurred whilst they were looking after a child or young person. Diary sheets were completed by volunteers for every visit they undertook. The diary sheets contained information on what activities the volunteers and children or young people had participated in. It also gave detail on any accidents or incidents that took place. Completion of diary sheets was mandatory for all volunteers as they formed part of the local authority’s safeguarding procedures. Diary sheets were completed and returned to the registered manager at the end of every month.

If volunteers had any concerns that children may be at risk of abuse, they would report straight away to the registered manager or via the local authority Children’s Access Point, which provides out-of-hours support. All volunteers had to undertake child protection training before they commence their volunteering role. Volunteers confirmed that they had received child protection training as part of their induction to the service. Volunteers, relatives, children and young people also had access to information relating to the safety of children, including bullying and online abuse. The website: www.westsussexscb.org.uk provided advice of what action people should take if they were concerned about the safety or welfare of any child.

The registered manager followed safe recruitment practices. New volunteers were expected to commit to volunteering for a minimum period of six months. Two references were on file for each volunteer and Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks had been undertaken to ensure that volunteers did not have a criminal record and were safe to work with children or young people. Volunteers fall within the scope of the Protection of Children Act (POCA) requirements which ensures that anyone unsuitable to work with children or young people is entered on the government register.

Care records provided comprehensive information about the child or young person and their risks had been assessed. For example, hazards associated with their home environment, behaviour outdoors and outdoor activities. One record stated, ‘[Name of child] has no awareness of danger, so needs constant supervision at all times, both within the home and whilst out in the community’. When volunteers supported people out in the community, they carried details of the child or young person they were looking after. This took the form of a small card which provided information about the child, their name, address, who to contact in an emergency, details of their disability or medical condition and the name of the volunteer. This ensured that the emergency services had vital information about the young person, should this be required quickly. One volunteer told us that she was aware of the risks associated with the child she looked after and was knowledgeable about the actions she would take.

Volunteers did not administer medicines as this was not their responsibility. Volunteers told us they would call an ambulance for any medical emergency. Some volunteers had received training in how to support a person with particular medical conditions such as asthma or epilepsy. The service had a policy about the administering of medicines, which volunteers were familiar with. Care files contained details of people’s medication, but this was for information only for volunteers and the registered manager.

Is the service effective?

Our findings

People had their needs assessed, preferences and choices met by volunteers with the necessary knowledge and skills. When children and young people were accepted into the FAB scheme for short breaks, the registered manager assessed their needs by meeting with them and their families and other professionals involved with their care. She then drew up a profile of people, which included information about what activities they wanted to do, the kind of support they needed, their likes and dislikes and details about their disability and/or associated health needs. Once this profile had been completed, the registered manager would look at the volunteers who were waiting to be matched with people and their families. For example, one volunteer had a health background and was interested in pets and animals. He was matched with a little boy who had significant health needs and similar interests and they visited garden centres together to look at the pets kept there.

Once volunteers have been matched with their family, they worked out together how many hours the volunteer was to support the child or young person and at which time in the week. Volunteers are committed to providing support of at least two hours per week. They then underwent an induction training programme comprising topics such as disability awareness, child protection, health and safety and moving and handling awareness. New volunteers received a volunteer training pack which consisted of a FAB Handbook giving details about the service, a health and safety handbook and what volunteers should do if they were worried a child was at risk of abuse.

Training was delivered by the area co-ordinators (registered managers) of two FAB schemes and trainers with a disability from a local training organisation. Volunteers were also trained in First Aid which was delivered by St John's Ambulance. Training was refreshed annually. Volunteers could also undertake additional training pertinent to their needs and that related to the person they were caring for. For example, where a child had difficulty in communicating, a volunteer could attend Makaton training. Makaton is a system which utilises symbols and photos to aid communication. Volunteers also had access to the local authority's West Sussex Grid for Learning which provides training and awareness on a range of topics.

Volunteers received regular supervision from the registered manager at FAB. These take the form of a face to face meeting at least once a year and other meetings in-between, which can be either over the 'phone or via email. One volunteer confirmed that she had received regular one to one meetings and that she could discuss anything, about her volunteering with the family and young person to what training she needed. Another described how he completed a diary sheet after every visit he had with the child he supported and a monthly log of visits. He said, "We complete a sheet every time we meet the child, like a diary". He felt very supported and referred to his one to one meetings saying, "We meet every so often, in person or by 'phone. They [one to one meetings] are quite regular".

The registered manager also received training and records showed that she had received training in Makaton, data collecting and reporting, epilepsy awareness and child protection.

Consent to care was given by the families of children and young people who received support. This was because the majority of people who received services were under the age to give their consent or would not have an understanding of what they were being asked. However, they were included in any discussions and decisions about the kinds of things they wanted to do with their volunteer.

Physical interventions were not used and the service took account of the guidance stated in The Children Act 1989, that physical restraint could be used where a child was presenting an immediate risk of serious harm to themselves or others, or of damage to property, and where no other intervention was likely to be effective. A volunteer told us that she never used restraint and used other methods to de-escalate difficult situations with the child she supported.

It was not the responsibility of the service to ensure that children or young people had sufficient to eat, drink and maintain a healthy diet. Nor was it in their remit to support people with access to healthcare services. This is because FAB provides a unique short break service to children and young people and therefore is not required to meet their nutritional or healthcare needs.

Is the service caring?

Our findings

Positive caring relationships were developed between volunteers and the families and children they worked with. The process for matching new volunteers with families was a gradual one. Following induction, new volunteers, supported by the registered manager, met with family carers of the child or young person. This was an informal meeting and an opportunity for volunteers and families to meet and get to know each other and discuss the kind of support the family would like. At this stage, there was no pressure put on volunteers or families to work together. Once everyone was happy and felt ready, then the volunteer would meet with the child or young person and their family. Arrangements would then be made accordingly, for example, for the volunteer to take the young person out or support them with an activity at home. One volunteer told us that they built up a rapport with the family first, supported by the registered manager of the scheme, and then visited independently. The little boy this volunteer supported enjoyed going to McDonalds and visiting the toy shop. A relative told us that their volunteer received detailed information about their son from the start. They told us, “They get a good briefing. My son’s information is on file, so the volunteer knew what to expect”.

Relatives and volunteers we spoke with were extremely positive about FAB. A relative described her volunteer and said, “[Named volunteer] is like a buddy really”. They told us that their volunteer would take their son to the park or “hang out in the coffee shop”. They went on to say, “We get well matched, experienced helpers and it gives breaks to the family and proper life experiences for the child. It’s very welcome”. Their volunteer thought that the experience of volunteering had been good for him too, saying “It’s kind of nice to spend time helping someone else. When someone has a disability, it’s quite an eye-opener. I’ve got a different perspective on things now”.

The service supported people to express their views and be actively involved in decisions about their care and support. The volunteers told us that the children they worked with had the choice of how they wanted to spend time together and it was a mutual decision. For example, one little boy enjoyed staying at home and making cakes sometimes. On other occasions, he preferred to go out. The volunteer was talented at decorating cakes, so they had made and decorated a cake together. Families were also involved in the decision-making process, as they knew their relatives best and the kind of support that would best meet their needs. Volunteers endeavoured to make their visits empowering for the child or young person and sometimes goals would be achieved. For example, one little boy paid for his bus ticket himself when he went out with his volunteer.

Objectives for the child or young person were drawn-up in a collaborative way, through discussion between the family, the registered manager and the volunteer. For example, one child’s objectives were, ‘to have increased opportunities to do activities inside and outside of the home. For his parents to have some time as a couple and take a break from their caring role. For [named sibling] to have some quality time with his parents’. The goals for the child were also drawn up, ‘For [name of child] to develop his social skills and have new experiences’.

People’s privacy and dignity was respected and promoted. One relative gave an example of when their son was out with their volunteer and how the volunteer had assisted him when he needed to go to the toilet urgently. The relative said that the volunteer had handled the situation sensitively and without causing embarrassment to their son.

Is the service responsive?

Our findings

People received personalised care that was responsive to their needs. Referrals of families to FAB came from a variety of sources or sometimes the family would contact FAB direct. Other families would hear about FAB through their child's school or through their social worker. The children or young people had a range of needs, for example, autism, a physical and/or learning disability and health needs. One relative said that it could be quite a challenge initially getting to know their volunteer. They told us, "It takes a while for everyone to get familiar and that everyone's happy" but added that they were extremely happy with their volunteer. They said their biggest fear was that their volunteer would move on and said, "I dread them having to do something else". The provider also attended information events to market the service and these were open to the public. Volunteers were sourced in a number of ways, for example, some were university students.

The short breaks which FAB provided could occur in families own homes or in the community. The volunteer could sit with the child or young person enabling their relatives to go out. However, the service did encourage volunteers to take people out into the community. One child attended a karate club with a volunteer which had helped to promote his independence and social skills. Volunteers worked all through the year, sometimes providing additional support to families during the school holidays. The service supports children from birth to the age of 18 years. At this point, the service withdraws, but volunteers often stayed in touch with people and became a family friend. FAB worked closely with the Child Disability Team and with schools offering a holistic approach that was personalised to the child and their family.

Care plans were drawn-up by the registered manager for every child who participated in the service. Plans provided essential information about the child and their families, for example, details of their disability and medical condition, their likes and dislikes. One child's record showed that they needed to be encouraged to try new foods and that they could use cutlery and drink from a cup independently.

Plans also provided volunteers with information about children's toileting needs and behaviour. In addition to supporting the child or young person they were allocated to, volunteers would often include the child's sibling too, to give their relatives a break.

Care plans were reviewed with relatives, the child and their siblings. Questions were asked such as, 'What difference does having a FAB volunteer make to your family? Did the child/young person contribute to the review?' One care record showed that the child was involved in his review, but was not always confident to answer questions. The review highlighted any changes that needed to be made which were implemented. A date was then made for the next review meeting within the year.

The service routinely listened to and learned from people's experiences, concerns and complaints. The registered manager was in regular contact with families. Families were asked for their views about the service on a regular basis. When children were matched to volunteers, the registered manager regularly liaised between all parties and, after three months, the placement was reviewed, with annual reviews thereafter. Families could call FAB at any time and the registered manager said that families might ring about a variety of things, for example, support over benefits. The service operated a 9 am – 5 pm service and at weekends, families could contact the helpline run by the local authority, the children's team access point. Families were provided with a list of helpful contacts.

Complaints were dealt with in line with West Sussex County Council's policy. This stated that complaints should be dealt with within ten days of receipt. If the complaint could not be resolved by the local authority within this time period, then the local authority would refer the complaint to a complaints panel or could call upon an independent mediator. If complaints were not resolved to the complainant's satisfaction, then they had the option ultimately of contacting CQC, the local government ombudsman or Ofsted. Families and volunteers we spoke with had no complaints about the service and no formal complaints had been received recently.

Is the service well-led?

Our findings

People were actively involved in developing the service. We did not speak directly with any children or young people who used the service as this would have been difficult for them. However, we did look at some questionnaires that they had completed. These were produced by the provider in an accessible format and used faces so that children could tick the relevant face to describe how they felt about the following questions:

Do you enjoy seeing your FAB volunteer?

Do you get to choose what activities you want to do?

Other questions asked were:

What activities do you do? (At home/outdoors/other).

Have you made new friends?

Can you try new things? Learn new skills? Go out more often? Do more things for yourself?

Any new activities you want to do? If yes, what? Children could draw a picture and completed questionnaires showed a variety of illustrations. One child referred to their volunteer and said, 'She is a lady and funny and kind. Takes me out'. Ten questionnaires had been completed by children and all feedback was positive.

Volunteers were also asked for their views about FAB and 12 feedback forms had been received. Feedback was good. A volunteer referred to the service and said, "It's well managed, it's really good. The structure in how they approach and find families and volunteers is well managed".

Families were asked for their views through a questionnaire. Twenty questionnaires were sent out with eight returned. The majority of families felt very involved with planning the use of their volunteer and short break. Having a FAB volunteer had enabled all the parents who responded to feel less stressed and tired. Having a FAB volunteer had led to an improvement in family relationships. The child or young person had felt less isolated in the community. Children with a FAB volunteer demonstrated increased independence and social skills. Parents also reported increased practical skills and educational knowledge and a better ability to handle change.

The service sent out a newsletter every six months to volunteers, families and other interested parties. These provided the reader with updates on a variety of topics. For example, the newsletter published in December 2014 gave information about new volunteers, a safeguarding update, learning opportunities and a volunteer event. The newsletter also provided useful contact numbers for contact with FAB and out of hours contact numbers.

'Thank you' events were organised for volunteers, but these were not generally well attended. The registered manager told us that it was difficult to organise a day and time which suited every volunteer. and that weekends appeared to suit more people. Other events were organised throughout the year where volunteers, parents and carers could get together and share news. Parents and carers, plus a volunteer representative, attended six monthly steering groups. These were also attended by the registered managers and other local authority representatives. These meetings provided an opportunity for people to share their views about FAB.

The registered manager was asked what she thought was good about the service. She said, "It's a tailor-made service to the family and based on what families are looking for. What volunteers are able to give too. Volunteers have different motivators. They bring some fantastic skills". She said that an ongoing challenge was, "Having enough volunteers to meet the needs of the service". There were always families waiting for a suitable volunteer to become available.

We asked two volunteers what they felt was good about volunteering with FAB. One said, "I just really enjoy it. It makes a massive difference to them [families]. It's really good fun and gives everybody something to look forward to". Another volunteer thought that the service made a big difference to families and said, "Giving them a break, they have family time with the other child".

There were robust quality assurance and governance systems in place to drive continuous improvement. The registered manager produced a report twice a year in collaboration with other registered managers running similar services in the county. The report analysed the success of the service and the challenges and provided data which included feedback from families. The report was published on the local authority's website and was sent to central government who provided additional funding for the service. Quotes from families in the report

Is the service well-led?

were, 'I would, without a doubt, have had to ask for support from the Child Disability Team if I didn't have a FAB volunteer and would have needed a paid carer to come and help with the boys, otherwise I would just not have coped'. Another was, 'Having the opportunity to have those two hours away from the kids has given us [parents] time to just spend together. I don't think our marriage would have survived without it'. Trends were analysed, for example, the number of short breaks delivered between April 2014 and September 2014 had dipped slightly in August because many families and volunteers took holidays.

A social care professional provided feedback and thought that the registered manager understood many of the issues that faced families caring for a child with a disability. She told us that volunteers were well trained and that they were

supported by the registered manager. She added, 'The families that I have visited have been very complimentary about the Fun and Breaks service, often feeling that the volunteer has become like part of the family'.

Registered managers from the other FAB schemes met together regularly to discuss service-wide issues, plan training and promotional events. The service worked in partnership with others such as the child disability team, healthcare professionals and schools. 'Team Around the Child' (TAC) meetings were attended by relevant people which provided a joined-up approach for the families to discuss and share their views. FAB also had links with other organisations and had regular meetings and joint workshops with, for example, Crossroads and Carers Support.