

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Paula Lahey
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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* (March 2011) and the evaluation schedule for children's homes.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: a service that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

Good: a service that exceeds minimum requirements

Satisfactory: a service that only meets minimum requirements

Inadequate: a service that does not meet minimum requirements

Service information

Brief description of the service

This children's home is registered to provide short-term care for up to six children and young people primarily with physical disabilities and/or learning disabilities. Young people can visit the service up to the age of 18. The home is located on a multi-purpose site and operated by a large charitable organisation managed by a Board of Trustees.

Overall effectiveness

The overall effectiveness is judged to be **good**.

Young people continue to benefit from a home that provides a safe and comfortable environment.

There is a strong and enthusiastic management team who support and guide a caring staff group. It is evident that all staff enjoy their work and this positively benefits young people.

A particular strength of the home is the child-friendly environment it provides with an abundance of play facilities and resources. Primarily the home ensures that young people with complex needs enjoy their time in the home, have fun, and maximise on the opportunities for new experiences. Staff have extremely good knowledge of the individual needs and characteristics of young people and support them to maintain good health, mobility and develop communication skills.

Young people are very happy in their environment and by the use of alternative methods of communication, staff offer young people choices in many aspects of their daily life. Staff receive a comprehensive training package which enables them to meet young people's individual needs well.

Recently the home has extended the age range to enable young people to visit the home up to the age of 18. Parents have appreciated this as it has enabled young people to continue to enjoy the facilities of the service and further develop social and life skills. Positive feedback has been received from parents and the placing authorities in relation to the care and support that is provided at the home.

One requirement has been made relating to Regulation 33 visits. Recommendations have been made to clarify and enhance certain standards or procedures. These are detailed below.

Areas for improvementStatutory 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 the person carrying out Regulation 33 visits shall observe the care provided, the practice of staff and (a) interview children accommodated, their parents, relatives and persons working at the home in order to form an opinion of the standard of care provided in the home. (Regulation 33)	14/11/2011

Recommendations

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

- ensure all children and staff are given the opportunity to discuss incidents of restraint they have been involved in, witnessed or been affected by, with a relevant adult. In particular this relates to keeping records of de-briefing meetings (NMS 3.17)
- ensure that where any sanction, disciplinary measures or restraint are used, children are encouraged to have their views recorded in the records kept by the home (NMS 3.18)
- ensure that all recruitment records consistently demonstrate that telephone enquiries are made as well as obtaining written references (NMS 16.1)
- ensure that the deployment of staff during key times e.g. mealtimes can meet the needs of all children resident in the home (NMS 17.1)
- ensure that the manager or delegated person in the absence of the manager regularly monitors, in line with regulations, all records kept by the home to ensure compliance with the home's policies. This relates to recording of actions taken in response to incidents, in the absence of the manager and senior manager (NMS 21.2)
- ensure that children's records fully document children's assessed needs and contribute to an understanding of the child's life. This relates to documenting all specific behaviour methods being used and the progress young people make towards the aims of the placement. (NMS 22)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for children and young people are **good**.

Parents, placing authorities and staff report that young people enjoy their short break visits. They are cared for by dedicated staff in a safe environment.

There is a multi-agency approach to assessing and addressing individual needs. Consequently young people receive personalised care resulting in positive outcomes for their physical and emotional well-being.

Young people have a tailor-made transition to the home, which includes visiting the service to meet staff and joining in with activities before building up to an overnight stay. These well-planned arrangements mean that young people are prepared emotionally and practically to their transition into the home and helps develop confidence and trust in the staff.

Careful planning of visits enables staff to support young people to develop social skills, peer interaction, and have lots of fun. It is evident that young people enjoy their visits and some said this was because it enabled them to see their friends, play together, and join in with activities.

Young people enjoy good health. The primary responsibility for supporting health care needs remains with parents as young people stay for only short break placements at this home. Medical needs are identified and reflected in individual 'All About Me' plans. The service works closely with the organisation nurse trainer to provide staff with specialist training in complex medical skills such as administering emergency seizure medication and gastrostomy feeding. Staff have current first aid and food hygiene certificates. This good level of training ensures staff are competent at addressing young people's diverse health needs and contributes to the enjoyment of a healthy lifestyle.

Young people enjoy nutritious meals while in the home. There is recognition of their individual dietary needs and these, along with preferred likes and dislikes, are incorporated into daily menus. Young people generally eat together around a large dining table, which promotes a positive social occasion and opportunities to enhance life skills. Young people are encouraged and supported to be as independent as they are able. Mealtimes, activities and personal care tasks provide good learning opportunities and enable young people to develop life skills. Young people have made particular progress with independent toilet training and communication skills.

Young people's educational needs are supported through key worker attendance at annual reviews and collaboration over key behavioural, manual handling or eating and drinking issues. The primary responsibility for young people's educational planning remains with parents, however, the home has appropriate communication between themselves and educational settings and this positively benefits young people as there is a shared understanding and development of educational targets.

The emphasis in the provision is that young people have a positive experience while away from their home. They benefit from having peer contact in a social setting. Young people enjoy opportunities for activities, trips, and outings which all enhance their life experience and awareness. Activities are thoroughly researched and risk

assessed but there is a commitment to them being inclusive activities. Young people do not miss out because of any particular factor of their ability or disability. Examples of this include trips to local leisure facilities, swimming and library visits.

The recent provision of enabling older young people to remain visiting the home has been a positive initiative. Age appropriate peer interaction is promoted as older teenagers can join in with the activities at the on-site adult resource centre.

Young people benefit from well established relationships between the service and parents. Key workers support young people to maintain contact with parents during their stay and also complete comprehensive communication dairies to ensure a shared understanding of young people's daily lives. Parents speak very positively about the service and comment 'the staff are extremely helpful and friendly and I am totally confident that they are caring for my child properly and seem to love their jobs' and 'staff are always friendly and helpful, it is a safe environment and my child enjoys going'.

Quality of care

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

The home is located on a multi-purpose site and is within easy access to all local resources and facilities, and close proximately to open countryside. The property is decorated, maintained, and furnished to a high standard with purpose-built fixtures and fittings to assist in the delivery of personal care. Young people have their own rooms and enjoy the comfortable and child-friendly environment. The Registered Manager is seeking additional ways in which to enable young people to personal their bedrooms.

Staff work closely with families to form a comprehensive initial picture of each child. Their individual needs are identified and a detailed organisation care and health plan and risk assessment are produced. These plans are regularly reviewed and agreed by parents to ensure that the home is fully aware of young people's current needs. Plans clearly detail the aim of the placement and staff ensure that these are addressed during young people's visits. Daily records are maintained and whilst they document young people's stay they do not effectively record the progress they make towards meeting the aims of the placement.

Young people benefit from positive relationships with staff. The care team interact with young people using appropriate verbal skills and alternative methods of communication. This ensures that young people are offered choices in many aspects of their life including meals, snacks, drinks, activities and when addressing personal care needs. Young people develop good relationships with staff and it is evident that they enjoy spending time together. Placing authorities and families confirm that they are very happy with the care that is provided at the home. Comments from them include, 'the service has provided excellent and much needed respite' and 'I feel very comfortable leaving my son, he runs in without looking back.'

Staff have received training in the safe administration of medication and this includes regular competency checks of their practice. Medication is stored, administered, and disposed of correctly and this contributes to young people's safety. Any medication issues are promptly referred, managed, and investigated to ensure that young people's welfare is maintained.

Young people's self-esteem, interaction, independence, and communication skills are developed through a range of varied and purposeful activities. It is evident that young people enjoy opportunities to play with friends and have fun. Good use is made of the many resources and facilities the service has to offer including soft play, sensory studio, hydrotherapy, and outside play equipment. The Registered Manager has worked in partnership with a parent group to purchase a new minibus as it was recognised that young people would benefit from increased opportunities for community activities and involvement. This summer young people have enjoyed art and craft, cooking, face painting, sensory play, and trips to local leisure facilities such as a farm and model village.

The home has produced a complaints procedure in symbol format in an attempt to provide young people with guidance on raising concerns. This formal process is supported by staff vigilance at observing young people's changing mood or non-verbal communication in order to effectively manage anxieties or worries.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

The safety of the residential provision has a number of strengths and areas of good practice including effective child protection systems, well managed health and safety and comprehensive risk assessments. Staff are vigilant at monitoring young people's physical and emotional well-being and respond promptly and sensitively to early signs of distress, anxiety and discomfort. This means young people's needs are well met and they feel cared for and secure within the home.

Young people enjoy sound relationships and interact positively with staff and others. The service promotes a positive culture of managing behaviour; sanctions are not used and there is a focus on encouragement, praise, and distraction. Staff receive regular training in an approved method of physical intervention and are knowledgeable about how to use these practices appropriately. The use of restraint is very minimal and applied appropriately to ensure young people are safe from danger. However, records do not confirm that an opportunity for de-briefing after an incident occurs, or that the views of young people about the intervention are sought. Policies are in place to support staff to effectively manage any incidents of bullying or young people missing from the home, however, in practice these areas do not present as issues for the young people.

Staff receive regular training in safeguarding which provides them with the skills and knowledge to protect young people from harm and abuse. A number of senior managers have designated responsibility for managing safeguarding concerns and

provide a good source of knowledge and support. All staff are aware of monitoring young people and reporting their concerns to a senior member of staff in response to an allegation or suspicion of abuse. The provision of clear policies and direct links to the Local Safeguarding Children Board ensure staff are able to report issues externally should this be required.

There are clear systems in place to recruit new staff and they do not start work until appropriate checks have been carried out. Telephone enquiries are made to verify references, however, this is not consistently recorded on all staff files.

Young people are closely supported by the care team and staff recognise particular vulnerabilities related to the diverse needs of those with complex needs and take steps to address these. Potential hazards for individuals and activities are appropriately identified, comprehensively documented and professionally managed, meaning that young people can enjoy many experiences with a balanced approach to risk taking.

The physical safety of the whole campus is a high priority for managers and all partners. Health and safety, fire safety, ancillary, maintenance, and security are well managed and monitored. Senior managers carry out monthly health and safety audits in order to monitor practices and systems to ensure full compliance with organisational and legal requirements. Statutory checks on facilities and equipment are carried out appropriately and staff and young people know what to do in the event of a fire.

All parents who participated in the inspection stated that they feel that their child's safety is given a high priority.

Leadership and management

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

The home is managed by a suitably qualified and experienced manager who is appropriately supported by a strong and enthusiastic responsible individual and senior management team. Managers keep up-to-date with new information and legislation and this is shared with staff during regular team meetings.

The recommendation raised at the last inspection has been fully addressed.

A number of documents and information sources make up the Statement of Purpose. This includes: a children's guide, mission statement, organisation Statement of Purpose, home specific Statement of Purpose and website. The information is comprehensive and together details how the organisation will care for young people. The children's guide is produced in pictorial format.

Staff receive excellent training and development opportunities that equip them with the skills and knowledge to meet the needs of the young people and the purpose of the organisation. This is a major strength of the service. The comprehensive

induction for all newly appointed staff includes mandatory training and induction standards and there is a commitment to developing staff and supporting them to achieve recognised qualifications. The organisation employs a number of specialist trainers. This is an excellent initiative as it ensures that training can be personalised to focus on the individual needs of each young person. Staff spoken with stated that the induction and ongoing training provided them with the skills, knowledge, and support to effectively care for the young people.

Staff say they feel well supported in their roles and confirm that supervision and team meetings enable them to reflect on their practice and on their relationships with young people. Annual appraisals are carried out in order to review staff's performance and development needs.

Staffing levels are sufficient to meet the needs of young people and these are increased dependent on numbers and individual requirements and generally enable one-to-one and group activities. However, at inspection, during two mealtimes there was not effective deployment of staff to enable a group of young people to be fully engaged in activities whilst another group ate their meal.

Senior managers have a good understanding of the home's strengths and weaknesses and there is a clear organisation development plan in place. In addition, the Registered Manager is currently working on a number of areas to further improve the quality of provision and outcomes for young people. These include the planning of an adapted kitchen to enhance young people's life skills and the purchase of a mini bus to improve access to off site activities.

There are various systems in place to monitor the quality of provision and compliance with regulations and policies. This includes Schedule 6 audits and a monthly health and safety inspection. Regulation 33 visits are carried out regularly but do not currently include opportunities to seek the views of young people, their families, and placing authorities at each visit. However, parents complete annual satisfaction surveys and young people's views are sought on activities within the home. Comments about the provision are very positive.

Young people's records are up to date and stored securely. Potential risks to young people and their behavioural needs are understood by the team and files contain detailed support plans and guidance on how needs will be met. However, one sampled file did not record a particular behaviour intervention technique that was being used.

Any incidents requiring Schedule 5 notification are well managed and investigated to ensure the safety and welfare of young people. Families are pleased with actions taken. On the rare occasion that both the Registered Manager and Service Manager are unavailable the recording of actions taken in response to incidents is not always completed until their return.

The rapport between staff, managers, and young people is warm, friendly, and respectful. Managers have the welfare of young people and staff at heart and

encourage them each to high achievement. Staff are enthusiastic about their care of young people and enduring in their own commitment to positive outcomes for them.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.