

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC025395
Inspection date	14/01/2013
Inspector	Maria McGranaghan
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	20/01/2012
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home cares for up to 25 children and young people from birth to aged 17 years. The home is divided into two houses close by one another. One house specialises in caring for children with learning disabilities. The other house cares for young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties, and there is also a mother and baby unit within this house. The service is owned by a voluntary organisation.

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**.

Young people make good progress in a home where their individual needs are very well managed. Achievements in education, behaviour and increased maturity are consistently met with young people developing increased aspirations for their future.

Young people are safe and feel protected from significant harm. They are extremely positive about the care they receive and the relationships they have formed with staff. Young people succeed in a home that provides a nurturing and safe foundation.

Young people benefit from well planned and individualised care. Detailed placement plans ensure that young people are cared for consistently and in line with their individual needs.

Young people benefit from a strong and stable staff team. Staff receive consistent supervision and training ensuring high standards of care are maintained within the home. Young people have excellent relationships with staff that understand their needs and are consistent in offering a nurturing environment for young people to thrive and grow.

The home is effectively managed with a strong emphasis on providing a high standard of child care practice. Robust monitoring systems ensure that all aspects of the care provided in the home is closely scrutinised and the appropriate action taken

to enhance performance within the home.

Despite these strengths there are weaknesses. Specifically, although it is clear that consultation is the foundation of all work undertaken with young people, sanction records do not routinely record young people's views and comments about how their behaviour was managed or if this was effective. Likewise, missing from home information is clearly recorded for young people living in the main home. However, the procedures for young people living in the satellite home are not and this compromises their safety should they be missing from home. As a result two recommendations are made at this inspection.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure staff working in the home know and implement the local authority and home's policy in relation to children going missing and their role in implementing this policy specifically within the satellite home (NMS 5.2)
- ensure where disciplinary measures are used, young people are encouraged to have their recorded in the records kept in the home. (NMS 3.18)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people make good progress across all areas of their lives. Consistent boundaries and routines are in place and this enables young people to experience a stable living environment in which to thrive and grow.

Young people have excellent relationships with staff. A strong, committed and highly experienced staff team work hard to secure positive outcomes for young people. Likewise young people benefit from additional support from a range of external services. This multi-agency approach assists young people to understand their personal circumstances and make positive and productive changes in their lives.

Young people are supported to attend appropriate educational provision. School reports highlight good progress and specifically recognise the support offered by staff in assisting young people to engage positively. Similarly, staff are consistent in promoting education as an important and essential feature in all young people's lives. Provision is made for homework and this is supported by an array of books and educational material to aid continued learning. Consequently, young people enjoy school and develop a sense of pride in their achievements.

Young people live in a home where their views and opinions are valued and

respected. Consultation with young people is daily practice, from discussions around the breakfast table to more formal young people's meetings. Young people with communication difficulties are assisted by the use of picture boards and symbols in order to enhance their ability to contribute to the consultation process. Young people are supported to personalise their bedrooms and make choices about their personal style and interests. This enables young people to feel important, enhancing self-confidence and esteem.

Planned and unplanned activities take place within the home. Individual interests are promoted and this ensures young people's personal aspirations are valued and supported. Consequently, young people's confidence and social skills have excelled in the home and surrounding area.

Young people benefit from effective and consistent health care. Regular consultation with health professionals supported by targeted keyworker sessions ensure young people have a good understanding of their personal circumstances. As a result, young people are supported to make informed decisions in their lives.

Staff encourage young people to develop independence skills in accordance with their developmental age and abilities. Detailed three stage assessments programs coupled with focussed keyworker sessions help to ensure that appropriate steps are taken to maximise individual potential. The person centred approach practiced within the home assists young people to prepare for adulthood while suitably equipping them with essential life skills.

Young people benefit from exceptionally well planned and supported contact with family. Staff maintain close links with families and involve them where appropriate in the overall planning of the young people's care. A parent said, 'This is the best home for my child, the staff are great, the home is beautiful and they are happy. I couldn't ask for anything more.' Detailed placement plans ensure contact only takes place with those whom it has been agreed and arrangements are reviewed regularly.

Quality of care

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

Young people are happy and thrive in a stable and supportive environment. Clear placement planning and target setting ensures young people's needs are consistently met and regularly reviewed. A multi-agency approach assists to highlight the changing needs of young people in order that appropriate steps are taken to address them. Consequently, young people make consistent progress in the home.

Young people's positive behaviour and their smallest achievement is celebrated within the home. Praise and special rewards are a consistent feature within young people's daily lives. This process enables young people to develop a good understanding of what is acceptable behaviour and provides a useful tool for addressing some negative behaviour.

Young people and their parents know how to complain. Information is provided in the young people's guide and organisational complaints documents. A parent said, 'I have no complaints, it is a wonderful home. If my child was unhappy I would be the first to know. He is very happy and the staff are great with him.' Procedures for managing complaints ensure they are handled fairly and investigated thoroughly by the manager or external nominated person. The positive relationship between staff and young people ensures that young people's views are valued and that they feel confident to raise matters.

Staff effectively address young people's educational needs through proactive relationships with partner agencies and parents. Young people's accomplishment within education demonstrates the commitment and effort of a focussed and child centred team.

Young people are encouraged to demonstrate socially acceptable behaviour. Young people work together with staff to develop individual behaviour management agreements, this helps to identify triggers for negative behaviour and strategies for positive behaviour management. Consequently, young people develop ownership of their behaviour and a better understanding of how their behaviour can impact upon others. Likewise, parents of young people who have a profound disability work in partnership with the home to determine and agree suitable behaviour management strategies. A parent said, 'I am very much involved in the decisions made about my child and this makes me feel confident that my child is receiving the best care possible.' However, young people do not routinely comment on their individual sanction record. Consequently, the lack of comments from young people hinders the process of monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of sanctions used in the home.

The service for young people is divided between the main home and a smaller satellite home. The standard of accommodation on the whole is exemplary. Young people are central to making the house into their home and say, 'It is like a mansion it's well posh.'

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Staff undertake child protection training in order that they are able to respond to suspicions or allegations of abuse. Risk assessments are in place and encapsulate individual risk factors for young people. Consequently, young people receive a high level of support in order to maintain their overall safety.

Young people are supported to live together and to respect each other. Squabbles and bickering between young people is suitably managed and monitored. Where there is a concern that bullying is taking place, the staff and the manager raise a 'cause for concern' in order that the appropriate action is taken to remedy to situation. For example, records of specific keywork sessions highlight the staff commitment in maintaining a bully free home.

Young people living in the main home have their safety and well-being very well protected. Individual snatch packs are in place to ensure the correct procedures and strategies are implemented without delay. Likewise, external agencies work with staff and young people to ensure a consistent approach is maintained should a young person go missing from home. The approach to the continued protection of young people is evident in the distinct reduction in young people going missing from the home.

However, young people living in the satellite home do not have a missing from home procedure. Staff said, 'Young people are cared for according to their plan and on a one-to-one basis. Young people have no history of previously being missing.' Although it is clear that young people receive a high level of support resulting in the opportunity for being missing being considerably reduced, there are no specific arrangements in place should a young person become missing. Consequently, there is potential for the safety of young people to be compromised.

Staff receive appropriate training in order to appropriately manage physical intervention within the home. Staff are clear that physical intervention is only used to prevent a young person harming themselves or others, and as a result this intervention is minimal. Where physical intervention has been applied, records detail the action taken, the length of time and the debrief offered to young people. This process assists young people to understand their behaviour and the reason why the intervention is required.

Staff promote young people's on-going protection by undertaking regular fire drills and service tests making sure that all faults are efficiently addressed. Likewise, staff are vigilant when managing visitors to the home and take appropriate steps to verify visitors identity in order to protect the young people. Clear evidence highlights stringent monitoring of all systems within the home including the appropriate storage, administration and recording of medication.

Leadership and management

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

Young people live in a home that is effectively and efficiently managed in their best interests. The home meets the aims and objectives of its Statement of Purpose, and young people, families and social workers are clear about the services and support the home provides.

The manager and staff clearly demonstrate a strong commitment to delivering child care practice tailored to the individual and personal needs of the young people they look after. The effectiveness of this approach is evident in the progress young people have made in many aspects of their lives.

The manager has a clear and realistic understanding of the strengths of the service and areas for further development based on strong evidence. The manager makes

excellent use of reflective practice ensuring consistent communication and consultation with the young people, parents, staff and social workers.

The manager consistently monitors the quality of care in order to improve the services provided to young people. The home shows a capacity for sustained improvement based on the progress young people continue to make.

The home has made good progress in addressing the previous two recommendations made at the last inspection. Specifically, the young people's guide is made available to all young people in a format easily understood and records of restraint contain information pertinent to a young person wishing to view their files now or in the future.

The external monitoring of the home is thorough. Evidence indicates clear lines of enquiry and focus based reporting. The manager is effective in demonstrating efficient responses to areas for development.

Staff are very well-supported by the manager. They have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities, and the high expectations for providing individualised child care practice. Supervision and team meetings are rigorously maintained and are key to the sustained development of the home.

Young people are looked after by a highly competent staff team who have a wide range of skills and experience. Staff access a comprehensive training programme that covers the needs of young people and provides staff with the skills and knowledge to effectively do their work. The numbers of staff on duty are sufficient to meet the needs of young people in the best possible way.

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 children's homes.