

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC025940
Inspection date	20/08/2012
Inspector	Joanna Heller
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	20/03/2012
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This home is run by a voluntary organisation. Its purpose is to provide long-term care and support for a maximum of four children or young people with severe learning or physical disabilities or both.

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 **adequate**.

Children and young people receive individualised and child focused care. Individual outcomes for young people are good and young people demonstrate small but significant personal growth. Equality and diversity is threaded through the service. Staff nurture young people demonstrating consistent caring commitment. Young people have lived at the home for a number of years and benefit from strong attachments with staff which underpin the success in making young people feel safe and happy. Young people's families and placing social workers are highly complimentary about the quality of support provided.

Some concerns were noted in relation to fire precautionary arrangements and communication of information. The manager has been asked to review the current arrangements for the locking of the front door.

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
32	Take adequate precautions against the risk of fire. In	18/09/2012

(2001)	particular; ensure fire doors are not propped open, carry out fire drills at suitable intervals both day and night, ensure a safe way to exit the building through both front door and side exit in the event of a fire. Ensure that personal emergency evacuation plans are in place for each child (regulation 32)	
4 (2001)	provide a children's guide in a form which is appropriate to the age, understanding and communication needs of the young people accommodated (regulation 4 (4))	25/10/2012

Recommendations

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

- ensure physical restrictions on normal movement within or from the home are not used unless this is necessary to safeguard children and promote their welfare and development. Such measures are used only where agreed with the responsible authority and parents. Such restrictions for one child do not impose similar restrictions on other children (NMS 10.4)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

The home is welcoming and is adapted to ensure that needs arising from young people's disabilities are met. Many of the young people have been living at the home since they were young children and have established solid attachments with staff. The home therefore, provides young people with a stable, secure and happy environment to live in with no placement breakdown. Young people are able to live with their sibling if appropriate. Young people's experiences of the home are highly positive and they experience significant individual growth. One young person who was previously immobile has become able to walk with staff guidance. Other young people have become able to understand boundaries and become less challenging. This in turn has enabled them to access the community and experience things which would have not previously been thought possible.

Young people are healthy and enjoy healthy lifestyles. Young people enjoy highly individualised care in accordance with their particular needs, and equality and diversity is threaded through the care provided. Each young person has a detailed plan of care which includes all key areas of need and details of their routines. Any needs arising from cultural heritage or disability are identified and met. Through the strong relationships developed staff understand what young people want and need.

Young people are welcomed in a planned way which ensures staff are able to meet their individual needs. All of the young people have learning disabilities and require high levels of support. Families are able to have close contact with their child and are sensitively supported. For some families this extends to supporting the family as a

whole. For example, one family were able to enjoy a family holiday in Barnardo's holiday accommodation supported by staff from the home. Such a family holiday would have not been possible without the support of the staff. Young people are helped to develop personal and self-care skills which are relevant to their age and understanding. Young people and their families are well supported in planning the transition of moving into adult services.

Young people have good school attendance. Young people are supported in making good educational progress and helped to understand the world around them. Staff attend key school events and meetings in partnership with parents or in the role of responsible parent. Young people enjoy active and varied lives and are able to participate in the community. Young people enjoy regular trips to the theatre, swimming and local clubs. Young people benefit from at least one holiday a year and were enjoying packing for their forthcoming holiday. Staff are sensitive to interests which may be enjoyed by an individual or group of young people, such as, train-based activities, and plan these accordingly. Families say that they feel their children are very well cared for by a competent, caring and committed team of staff.

Quality of care

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

The building provides young people with suitable homely accommodation that they are able to welcome their family into. The accommodation is spacious, allowing each of the young people to enjoy their own freedom. Each young person has their own bedroom which they are supported to personalise accordingly, reflecting a sense of individuality. The home is adequately maintained and decorated although, some carpets are stained and the kitchen is coming towards the end of its useful life. The manager advises that a plan of upgrading these areas over the next year or so is in hand. Bathrooms and bedrooms are fitted with hoists and specialist equipment as required to meet the needs of young people arising from their disabilities. Young people make full use of the spacious garden and really enjoy the specialist swing and slide.

Equality and diversity is threaded through the service provision. Staff ensure that young people's needs relating to their cultural heritage, religion and disability are recognised and met. Staff when assessing an admission consider such areas and discuss with parents how these needs can best be met. For example, young people are provided with particular diets and supported to attend their local temple wearing appropriate cultural dress sourced by the staff team.

Young people enjoy healthy lifestyles and are supported to access medical professionals such as doctors, dentists and opticians as appropriate. A variety of specialist health professionals such as speech and language, epilepsy nurse, physio therapists and orthotics teams are involved in their care. Staff are proactive in seeking advice such as, liaising with wheelchair clinic. When young people have been ill, such as having chicken pox, staff have been sensitive to ensure their additional care needs are met. Staff encourage young people to eat a healthy diet and

encourage them to try new things. For some young people the introduction of healthy options is a protracted process and staff continue to balance developing a healthier diet with individual choice. Staff are well trained and competent having received training in key areas such as first aid, food handling, moving and handling and caring for young people with special needs.

Staff display a solid commitment to ensuring young people have the best life outcomes possible. Young people are happy and settled at the home and are able to interact well with each other and staff. One parent commented how their child was always happy when the staff come to collect him after spending time at the family home, 'and would simply say 'bye'. This parent was clear that this meant that their child was happy and secure at the home living with people with whom they had developed long term attachments.

Management are very clear and specific as to the type of young person whom they are able to care for and the importance of ensuring good group dynamics, therefore, no inappropriate placements are made. Admissions are generally planned and emergency admissions occur rarely. The admissions process is geared towards the young people and their families' needs and overnight stays are gradually introduced. Young people have lived as a whole group for over two years and some young people have lived together for over five. Similarly staff changeover is minimal. Such continuity allows clear strong attachments to develop. Family members and social workers say they are made very welcome and have developed positive relationships with all staff. Parents refer to staff working closely in partnership with them, keeping them up to date on all aspects of their child's care.

Staff deliver highly individualised care in accordance with each young person's particular needs. Due to their autistic care characteristics some young people are most settled when routines are clear and familiar. Staff closely adhere to these routines with any variations fully explained. Similarly, when young people present any level of challenging behaviour, staff adhere to the guidelines in the detailed behaviour plan ensuring a consistency of approach throughout the staff team. When a young person is challenging boundaries staff try to establish what may be being communicated by this and seek to understand the young person's feeling and views. Young people have limited understanding of many aspects of their world around them and staff view behaviour as a way of communication. Staff do not use consequences and sanctions, as such, nor is restraint used. Staff seek to distract young people from any negative behaviour they are displaying and verbally reinforce boundaries. Staff have an in-depth awareness of each of the young people and how they communicate.

Staff find that some young people enjoy being kept active and ensure they are able to go out and about most days. Staff are aware that challenging behaviour may be the result of being easily bored or conversely over stimulated. Staff therefore are constantly monitoring the interaction of young people with staff and their environment. A particular strength of the home is the commitment to providing young people with a wide range of activities, such as, theatre trips, jubilee parties, eating out and going to the cinema as well as enjoying an annual holiday. Staff plan

trips, such as, visits to train museums around young people's individual interests. Some young people are able to communicate what they would like to do and plan the activity, and the journey using the internet. Staff simply accompany them, enabling the young person to do what is of particular interest to them. One young person was able to enjoy an outward bound holiday with staff support, trying out new adventures such as caving and abseiling. Something which their family would not have previously thought possible.

Education is positively promoted and geared at levels appropriate to the needs of the young people. Young people are helped to gain an understanding of the world around them through daily activities in the home. Staff ensure that young people maintain excellent regular school attendance. Staff are aware of the educational abilities and goals of each of the young people and attend all school events and meetings in partnership with parents. Young people are informally encouraged to develop independence skills at the level suitable to their understanding and experience small but significant personal growth. This is individually demonstrated through development of their skill base and well-being, such as, improvements in self-care skills, mobility, and behaviour and communication skills. Adults supporting the young people in their day-to-day lives, whether in school or at the home, are aware of key information and changes.

Young people enjoy very positive relationships with staff. Parents refer to staff who are caring, kind and patient who ensure that they are kept up to date with what's happening in their child's life. Parents consistently rated the support given to them and their children as outstanding. Parents comments included 'it's hard not to over praise, it's excellent'....'I can't praise it enough'...'I am very happy with the care, they always stimulate him and keep him active'.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people feel safe, secure and well cared for. Staff have developed long term relationships with young people and understand their individual communication methods. Staff work with young people on a daily basis to develop more socially appropriate ways of communicating and behaving through reinforcing appropriate behaviours. Staff seek to understand and respond to children and young people's needs based upon their knowledge of them. Individual behaviour management plans focus on possible triggers for distress and how to avoid these. Sanctions, as such, are not used as young people have limited understanding of such consequences to their behaviour. Staff are trained in restraint and are clear when this is appropriate to be used. Staff, however, have not had any situation where restraint has needed to be used.

Young people are effectively safeguarded from going missing through rigorous security precautions. Young people's care characteristics mean that they would be at risk if leaving the home unsupervised and would be immediately reported missing. Children and young people are safeguarded from going missing by a locked front

door and satisfactory staffing levels. There has been no multi disciplinary review of whether the locking of the front door is the most appropriate way to safeguard young people from going missing balanced against their civil liberties.

Staff carry a key to exit the front door when on duty, as there is no emergency key stored at the door. The side exit from the garden is fitted with a padlocked gate, in the event of an emergency this may prevent a quick escape. No evidence of a night time drill being carried out was available. This potentially means that staff and young people may not be able to exit the building in an emergency, particularly at night when staff are sleeping in. The reasons for these extra security measures is to safeguard the vulnerable young people from going missing. However, there was no evidence that these measures have been fully risk assessed, for example, no personal emergency evacuation plans are in place nor are these additional security measures included in the general fire risk assessment for the home. The home has fire doors fitted throughout, however, the fire door to the utility room was propped open presenting a fire risk. These shortfalls have the potential to place young people and staff at risk of harm in the event of a fire.

Staff are trained in safeguarding children and are aware what to do should an allegation of a child protection nature be made. Feedback from families and stakeholders is that children and young people feel safe and well cared for. Comprehensive risk assessments identify children and young people's vulnerability and any risks regarding activities.

Leadership and management

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

Management arrangements are clear and the home is adequately resourced to ensure that young people receive good levels of support. Staff demonstrate a solid commitment to working with young people. All care and support is individualised and child focused, responding to each of the young people's complex and diverse needs. Equality and diversity is promoted through the service provided to young people. Parents and placing social workers give highly complimentary feedback on how staff support the young people in their care.

No complaints have been received by the home and families have confidence in the home's ability to respond to any issues of concern which they may raise. The Statement of Purpose and children's guide inform people of the services available, however this is not produced in a format which is suitable to meet the communication needs of the young people. Many of the young people, due to their care characteristics require the support of a family member or advocate to assist them, should they wish to complain. However, for those who may be able to do so independently, there is no easily accessible information in a suitable format to advise young people on how to complain and whom they can complain to.

The home is well staffed ensuring that young people's needs are met. Staffing is arranged according to the needs of the young people. A minimum of two staff are

scheduled on duty to support the three young people and one young adult. In peak periods, a minimum of three staff are scheduled to enable young people to access the community. One waking night staff in addition to one member of staff who sleeps on site, is on duty each night. This ensures that young people have staff support available at all times. Young people are settled at night but can call on staff assistance should they require it. This means that staff are available to respond flexibly to young people's needs and desires. Staff are competent in the roles they perform and establish positive relationships with young people, parents and other agencies.

The manager leads by example and has strong expectations for staff care practice. Staff feel that one of their strengths is the fact that they work well together as a team to ensure good outcomes for young people. Staff feel well supported through regular supervision and appraisal. The organisation demonstrates a commitment to staff training and staff benefit from training relevant to the roles they perform. Core training such as child protection, first aid, food hygiene, restraint, and health and safety, is provided to all staff. Most staff have completed the Diploma in Caring for Children and young people. Training plans are in place for those who have yet to complete this qualification.

Sound systems are in place for monitoring the standards of care within the home. A review of the quality of care has been conducted under regulation 34 and visits to the home by the organization are carried out monthly. However these quality assurance processes neglected to identify the issues raised in safeguarding in relation to deprivation of liberty and shortfalls in fire safety.

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.