

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Rossella Volpi
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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 home is run by a voluntary organisation. Its purpose is to provide long term care and support within a homely environment to a maximum of four children or young people between the ages of 12 and 18 years, who have severe learning or physical disabilities or both.

Overall effectiveness

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

Young people benefit from a home that is well managed and from a staff team that is well led and supported, knows them well and is committed to their welfare.

This home is conducted with the best interests of young people in mind and to the satisfaction of families and placing authorities. The quality of provision is of a good standard, but with a number of excellent features. The quality of care and the outcomes for young people are particular strengths and are considered to be outstanding.

The care provided is well planned and highly individualised. There are good strategies to help young people to stay healthy and there is sensitivity to health needs relating to culture and ethnicity. Young people feel safe at the home and at ease with staff, whose company they enjoy. Young people receive excellent, individualised support from a staff team committed to working in partnership with their families and external professionals. This enables appropriate help and guidance to be provided consistently, to meet identified needs and to achieve educational and personal goals.

Areas for improvement relate to aspects of reviewing the quality of care, staff training and clarity of managerial roles.

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
34	establish and maintain a system for reviewing the quality of	31/10/2011

(2001)	care provided in the children's home (Regulation 34).	
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Recommendations

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

- ensure clear arrangements for the level of delegation and responsibility of the manager (NMS 21)
- review the training received by staff to ensure that it is effective. (NMS 18)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people are making excellent progress at the home. This has been further enhanced by the successful engagement of families in all aspects of care planning. This has been recognised by external professionals and families who have used words such as 'tremendous' or 'great' to describe the outcomes for young people. They gave a range of examples that demonstrated the sustained and very positive changes for individual young people.

Young people have well established trusting relationships with staff and this is an important contributor to their opportunities to develop confidence and a positive self-view. This is enhanced by staff's value for diversity, for the individual characteristics and the abilities of each young person.

The excellent practice in behaviour management has enabled young people to participate in a range of activities. This contributes to the preparation for their future life and their engagement with the wider community. For example, staff have been successful in addressing the risk of running away posed by young people. The outcomes for the young people involved have been significant. With such risk reduced, staff have been able to safely support them to become more independent, enjoy a wider range of pursuits and spend quality time with people important in their life.

Staff put much emphasis on activities, recognising how much these can contribute to the enjoyment of life for the young people, to interaction with people outside the home and to complementing their education.

Young people are engaged in a number of pursuits that they enjoy. They attend clubs and take part in outings such as, trips to beaches, the countryside, zoos or places of interest. An annual holiday away from the home is planned for the summer. Such ability to engage well and benefit from the wider variety of pursuits represents significant progress for some young people.

Young people are well engaged in education, enjoy school and are making good progress. There has been excellent progress in a number of key areas. These include, for example, mobility, alertness, health, enjoying a wider variety of food tastes and textures and self-help skills.

Young people are well prepared for change, whether that is about coming to live at the home, leaving or other transitions, for example, to new classes in school. This preparation has been successful in minimising anxiety or distress and excellent outcomes have been achieved at times in enabling young people to experience changes positively.

Overall, in relation to the starting point of individual young people, outcomes have been impressive.

Quality of care

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

Young people receive excellent care and individualised support that has resulted in outstanding outcomes. This has been acknowledged by families and external professionals. For example, a school referred to the 'fantastic work' that the staff at the home do with each young person. Placing authorities praised the excellent skills of staff, the way they work with young people, their vigilance and their alertness to any sign that the young people are giving about feelings and needs. The relationships between staff and young people are exceptional and have led to an environment where young people feel happy and relaxed.

Written plans detail individual goals and achievements. The staff focus on assisting young people to maximise their potential and improve their quality of life. This has been enhanced by a recent change in internal care plan reviews with more emphasis on staff effectiveness in working towards the desired outcomes for young people.

Young people's views are valued; staff support them to express their opinions about the services provided and to make decisions on matters that affect them. This continues to be very challenging, as the young people have communication difficulties associated with their disabilities. While the young people are not able to verbalise their wishes and feelings, staff are particularly alert to what they express through their behaviour. Consultation is also promoted via excellent communication with social workers and other people significant to the young person.

The commitment of staff and the work channelled into ensuring families and friends maintain contact with young people and have a say about their care, are excellent. Such practice of inclusion continues to demonstrate how staff in this service value and promote equality and diversity.

Staff are prompt in ensuring that young people's health needs are well met and are aware of and sensitive to those relating to culture and ethnicity. Staff have a sound understanding of what makes up a good, balanced diet. They have had training on nutrition and have knowledge of a range of eating disorders and physical difficulties with eating. The home has excellent food hygiene practices in place.

Staff put much emphasis on leisure pursuits recognising how much these can contribute to the enjoyment of life for the young people, to interaction with people outside the home and to complementing their education.

Young people live in a home that is domestic in style. It is well decorated and furnished. Young people are supported in personalising their bedrooms. There are bright and spacious dining and living areas and a large garden that young people enjoy. Overall the premises are consistent with the provider's aim to create a homely atmosphere, which facilitates each young person's growth, development and acquisition of age appropriate skills.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

The environment and the care practices in this home contribute well to the promotion of young people's safety and welfare. A particularly strong feature is the relaxed atmosphere, with young people showing confidence and indicating that they are at ease with staff and enjoying their company. There is a culture of openness and trust, underpinned by the sound relationships established. Families and placing social workers are confident that young people are safe and feel safe at the home.

Staff respect the young people's privacy and promote their dignity, with particular attention being given to gender and cultural issues when providing personal care.

There are sound recruitment and vetting procedures in place, to both assess staff competency for the role and to minimise the risk of young people being exposed to potential abusers.

Certain information is presently unavailable to the manager. For example, the content of and who has assessed the references received. This makes it more difficult for the manager to properly consider some of the matters to be addressed in the support, supervision and induction of new staff. However, this is being reviewed. Furthermore, as the home has benefitted from a stable staff team, recruitment of new staff has been minimal.

Young people's safety within the home is promoted through periodic health and safety checks and well considered risk assessments.

Bullying has not been an issue. Staff vigilance, as well as the excellent relationships with schools, minimise the possibility of bullying taking place. Staff's management of behaviour takes account of young people's individual needs and levels of understanding. There is reliance on a number of positive interventions including distraction, taking the person away from the group to calm them down and attention to what the young person is trying to express. As some young people have limited or no verbal means of communication, staff are particularly alert to unacceptable behaviour that may indicate anxiety or distress.

There is good information and leadership to ensure that staff work according to the guidelines set to protect young people, reinforced by periodic discussion. Consequently, staff are aware of what to do should there be a situation that poses risks to young people, or an allegation or suspicion of abuse. There is good information and leadership to ensure that staff work according to the guidelines set to protect young people, reinforced by periodic discussion. Consequently, staff are aware of what to do should there be a situation that poses risks to young people, or an allegation or suspicion of abuse. Staff have received training in safeguarding. Following a recommendation from the previous inspection, the manager is now looking at additional safeguarding training. In particular, training that enables the sharing of ideas with people from other environments and addresses safeguarding non verbal young people with complex needs.

Leadership and management

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

This is a well managed home, conducted with the best interest of young people in mind and delivering excellent outcomes. Managers are well respected by staff, accountable and accessible. Managers have been successful in establishing an ethos of promotion of equality and diversity. Staff and managers give much consideration on how best to meet individual needs and those specifically arising from gender, culture or race. They explore ways for supporting young people overcoming the various forms of discrimination they experience.

Managers receive good quality supervision and support. Management meetings are reported to be a good source of information and a valued forum for peer support. There is some lack of clarity regarding lines of accountability and the manager's level of authority in relation to management of staff performance.

Staff are well supported and guided. They receive regular supervision, annual appraisals and are able to discuss matters at regular team meetings. Therefore there are a number of appropriate means to enable staff to look at ways to improve the service offered and review young people's progress.

Staff like working at the home. Some representative comments were: 'There is a great manager, able to channel all our energy and ideas to improve practice', 'She uses the team to their best' and 'The staff group is very committed to improving the quality of young people's lives.' Such comments are consistent with the positive feedback received from placing authorities and families.

Most of the workers have relevant professional qualifications at the appropriate level or are studying to achieve this. This is complemented by a training programme for staff. Managers and staff consider that the quality of the training offered by the organisation does not meet staff needs well, overall. In particular it was raised that it does not fully meet staff developmental needs and does not help stimulate new ideas. Additionally, the lack of information provided to the manager from the organisation about the training budget allocated to the home, prevents her from prioritising the training needs of the team. This is in relation to the uniqueness of the service or the individual needs of the young people. This matter was raised at the last inspection in relation to training in safeguarding. While there is no evidence that this has had a negative impact on care or outcomes, it is an important matter. If protracted, it has potential to undermine staff confidence to meet needs well and to hinder imaginative development in care.

Young people's welfare is monitored regularly by senior management through a variety of means including monthly visits, consultation with stakeholders and review of records. The manager undertakes periodic checks to audit a number of relevant matters, as required by Regulation 34, but there are some omissions. In particular there is no report to evidence that an appraisal of the quality of care, consistent with the expectations of such regulation, is completed and therefore the audits are limited in their scope.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.