

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Paula Lahey
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This local authority service is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to ten children and young people. The service can provide a home and a short break service for children and young people who may have a physical disability and/or a learning disability.

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**.

Young people like staying in this home and benefit from a provision that provides a safe and comfortable experience. Young people enjoy positive relationships with a staff team who clearly understand their individual needs well; consequently young people demonstrate feeling safe and secure in the care that is provided.

Young people's complex, medical needs are well met and this promotes them staying as healthy as possible. Staff are trained in administering medication and first aid and consequently specialist health interventions are carried out professionally and sensitively.

While notable progress has been made this year in written care planning, the home does not record measurable aims for each young person's placement. This makes it difficult to ensure there is a consistent approach to developing young people. Having said that, the staff team, parents and placing social workers can all describe progress that individual young people have made; this includes developments with behaviour, social skills and independence.

The home is well equipped with sensory resources and young people are encouraged to choose activities they would like to join in with. During the week the time available for young people to engage in quality purposeful activities is limited. This is due to the systems in place to check on medications.

There is a sound approach to safeguarding young people; this includes effective links

with local agencies, a manager who promptly shares concerns about young people, and solid systems for notifying significant events. Positive feedback has been received from parents and professionals in relation to the care and support that is provided at the home.

There is an experienced and suitably qualified management team in place and action has been taken to address previous requirements and recommendations.

Requirements made following this inspection relate to: documentation of physical interventions; providing staff with food hygiene training; ensuring all shift leaders effectively deploy staff resources and delegate tasks appropriately; carrying out formal and regular consultation with young people and significant others about ways to improve the quality of care, and ensuring HMCI is provided with copies of quality assurance reviews on a six monthly basis. To further improve, it is recommended that the home devises individual behaviour support plans for young people who need them; ensures any physical restrictions in the home are clearly assessed, and that agency staff files contain all the required information.

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
17B (2001)	ensure that within 24 hours of the use of any measure of control, restraint or discipline, a written record is made in a volume kept for the purpose. In particular, ensure that all incidents are documented in the monitoring logbook in addition to individual record forms (Regulation 17B(3))	16/07/2012
25 (2001)	ensure that there is at all times a sufficient number of suitably competent persons working at the home to ensure the need to safeguard and promote the health and welfare of the children accommodated. In particular, this relates to shift leaders effectively deploying staff and providing them with clear direction, and guidance throughout the shift (Regulation 25 (1)(b))	16/07/2012
27 (2001)	ensure that all staff receive appropriate training. In particular, ensure that staff can access up to date food hygiene training (Regulation 27)	01/10/2012
34 (2001)	establish and maintain a system that shall provide for consultation with children accommodated in the home, their parents and placing authorities (Regulation 34(3))	30/07/2012
34 (2001)	ensure the registered person shall supply to the HMCI an overview report in respect of all matters monitored in Schedule	30/07/2012

	6 (Regulation 34 (1)(a)(b)), at appropriate intervals. (Regulation 34 (2))	
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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 that children and young people are able to enjoy their interests, develop confidence in their skills and are supported and encouraged by staff to engage in leisure activities. In particular, ensure that the management of receiving and checking medication into the home does not impact on children's purposeful activities (NMS 7)
- ensure that physical restrictions on normal movement within the home are not used unless this is necessary to safeguard children and promote their welfare and development. Such measures are only used where agreed with the responsible authority and, if appropriate, the parents. Such restrictions for one child do not impose similar restrictions on other children (NMS 10.4)
- ensure that a record of the recruitment and vetting checks which have been carried out on agency staff includes the information described in the national minimum standards (NMS 16.3)
- ensure that children's records contribute fully to an understanding of the child's life. This relates specifically to ensuring that individual care plans document individual behaviour support plans, details measurable outcomes and comprehensively records children's progress. (NMS 22)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people experience a positive transition into and from the service. Partnership working with young people, their families and significant others is effective, and ensures that admissions are delivered at a pace which meets the needs of each individual. Consequently, young people settle into the routines of the home and feel confident and secure in their environment. Young people who have not stayed away from their family home before are developing confidence and independence in this area. This is supporting them with their transition to adult life and has also resulted in young people being able to go on school trips and holidays successfully.

Parents and placing social workers say that young people benefit from attending the service and can tell their children are always happy to return each time. Young people like the staff group and are relaxed in their relationships with them. Young people will readily seek out staff for comfort as well as to play and have fun with. Young people's emotional resilience is fostered as the team are vigilant to young people's individual presentation and are quick to respond to any signs of

unhappiness, illness or anxiety.

Staff, parents and social workers are able to describe how young people have developed and progressed since being in the service. One parent says, 'my child has to wear a wrist splint, which has proved difficult. Staff at the home have been successful in encouraging my child to wear it – more so than the school has'.

Young people who live in the home on a longer term basis have made particular improvements in their health, which in turn, has improved their attendance and engagement with school placements. Other young people have progressed with understanding and accepting boundaries, developing their mealtime social skills and learning to interact appropriately with others. Some young people are learning skills for adult life, such as making their packed lunch meal for the next day and helping with cooking tasks. Social workers comment positively on how well the service supports young people's relationships with their family. A particular example includes the staff team supporting a young person with a bereavement. Another family have been supported to more effectively manage a young person's specialist health interventions.

Quality of care

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

Young people benefit from the effective partnership working the staff team have established with families, health and education services and placing authorities. Support plans are drawn up and there has been a notable improvement in the quality of information recorded. This has resulted in all staff being more fully aware of young people's individual needs. Parents and social workers agree and say: 'My young person's care plan is lovely. The member of care staff has taken great care to explain everything really clearly' and 'they follow strict care plans word for word and inform us of any concerns. We feel 100% confident that our daughter is cared for as well as if she was at home with us'.

The shortfall with internal care plans is that they do not record measurable aims and objectives for the young person's placement. This makes it difficult to ensure a consistent approach is taken to develop the young person across all outcome areas. Additionally, daily records detail the care that is given and do not focus on what young people have achieved or are gaining through their placement. Social workers confirm that they would like to receive more detailed reports on the progress young people are making.

Young people respond well to the calm and caring staff team. Positive relationships are fostered and result in young people enjoying their stays. The staff team couple their caring approach with evident skill at supporting young people's health emergencies. One parent says 'the staff at the service have shown kindness and compassion to my child and myself. They have dealt with complex seizures and subsequent anxieties with obvious experience and empathy'. The staff team liaise closely with young people's health consultants and appropriately share any concerns

about emerging or changing health needs. Staff are suitably trained in administering medication, delivering first aid and supporting complex health interventions, and therefore ensure safe practice in these areas.

Key workers liaise with young people's education providers. Primarily to keep them informed about how the young person has been during their visit but also to attend annual review meetings.

Young people have access to a wide range of sensory resources and activities within the home and grounds. During weekday evenings young people's opportunity to engage in purposeful activity is limited. In part, this is due to staff spending time when young people arrive checking in medication. While this process ensures safe medication systems, the length of time it takes does affect young people's quality engagement in activities. During the weekends and holidays there is greater opportunity to spend quality time enjoying the resources within the home and engaging in community based activities. Recently young people have enjoyed the Diamond Jubilee celebrations.

Young people are supported to make choices about their daily living and care needs. Over the past six months the staff team have improved their skills at using signs and communication techniques; consequently, young people can feel more confident that their needs are more readily understood. The majority of parents feel well informed about their young person's care during their stay and comments include 'communication is fantastic, we know everything we need to know and the staff are great at taking into account everything we tell them'. Not all parents share this view and a small number would like to be provided with more detail on what young people have been doing during their visits. The manager is planning to address these issues.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

All families and professionals who contributed to the inspection are confident that young people's safety is given a high priority in the home. Young people show, by their interaction with staff and their relaxed manner, that they feel safe and secure in their environment and the care they receive.

The Registered Manager has a good understanding of the diverse needs of the young people and responds promptly and appropriately to any concerns involving their welfare and well-being. There are effective links with safeguarding agencies including child protection and health; and there is an open and transparent approach to sharing concerns and working in partnership. This ensures that concerns are handled quickly and in a way that protects young people and others involved. Bullying, going missing and engaging in risk taking behaviours are not issues that affect the young people who access this service.

Young people's positive behaviour is promoted; sanctions and punitive approaches

are not used and there is a focus on distraction and de-escalation. Some staff show particular skill in this area and demonstrate an instinctive and innate approach to engaging with young people and channelling their behaviour in a purposeful manner. Restraint is used minimally and only at times when young people may be hurting themselves or others. All incidents of applying physical intervention are recorded on incident report forms. Additionally, the home maintains a logbook to enable easier overall monitoring of all events. There have been a small number of interventions that have not been recorded in the logbook in addition to the individual record form.

There has been a marked improvement in recording any potential risks to young people. These are now being documented in individual care plans and provide guidance to staff on how to manage particular situations. However, not all young people who require them have a clearly documented behaviour support plan in place. This means there is the potential for an inconsistent approach to be used.

Recruitment of permanent staff is carried out centrally. The manager is notified when safer recruitment checks have been carried out and maintains copies of key documents within the home. The service has recently engaged the use of agency staff. Identity and current enhanced Criminal Records Bureau checks are verified and copies kept on file. However, profiles provided by the agencies did not fully clarify that agency workers have been subject to all the same checks as those required for permanent staff. The service took immediate action to address this matter.

Young people's physical safety and security is assured by regular servicing of health and safety equipment, review of environmental risk assessments and opportunities to practice the evacuation procedures. A very small number of parents have commented that they feel the gate from the home's grounds could be more secure. The staff have looked at this and ensure that young people are provided with staff support when accessing this area. The ground floor area of the home can be separated into two in order to enable young people with different physical and behavioural needs their own environment. The connecting door cannot be opened by young people and limits their access, without staff support, to some parts of the home. Managers are clear that this approach promotes young people's safety and freedom within the home, however, there is no documentation in place to support this.

Leadership and management

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

The current Statement of Purpose has a number of generic aims which reflects the local authority provision. To ensure that families are clear about the specific functions and day-to-day delivery provided in the home, the manager has devised additional parents and young person's guides. The young person's guide is available in a pictorial, photograph and symbol format; making it easier for those with communication difficulties to understand. Additionally, the service has devised individual guides to support young people with their transition into the home. These guides have included personalised timetables and photographs of their bedrooms.

There is an experienced and suitably qualified management team in place. A large majority of staff have worked in the organisation for a number of years and provide a stable and caring approach. Over the past year sickness and vacancies has led to the use of bank and agency staff. Sufficient staffing levels have been maintained and there has been a commitment to ensure that there are always core staff on each shift who the young people know well. The service is currently recruiting to the vacant positions.

Staff are supported to achieve nationally recognised qualifications and since the last inspection they have completed mandatory training in child protection, physical intervention, first aid and manual handling. A small number of staff have not received an update in food hygiene training.

Over the past five months there has been a concerted effort made to improve the regularity of supervision for the staff team. Contingency plans are now implemented to ensure that if supervisors are unavailable, staff still receive regular supervision. The large majority of staff feel well supported by colleagues and managers and confirm there are opportunities to discuss practice issues and direct work with the young people.

During the inspection an incident occurred relating to a health emergency of a young person. The sensitive and appropriate manner in which this situation was handled ensured the safety and well-being of the young person involved. However, ineffective delegation and deployment of the remaining staff and resources resulted in another young person's placement plan not being followed on this occasion. The Registered Manager was not alerted to this shortfall in a timely manner, however, once aware the appropriate steps have been taken to address this.

Appropriate action is taken to investigate and resolve any concerns or complaints raised and there is a robust system in place for notifying the appropriate authorities about significant events. A number of professionals commented positively on the proactive response they receive from the service when they raise suggestions for improvement. They report feeling confident that any guidance is taken on board and action is taken to resolve the issue.

This service demonstrates a capacity to improve in that there has been good progress made to address requirements and recommendations raised at the last inspection. The manager has stated that he is continuing to focus on improving some areas further and has included these on the newly devised development plan. In addition to addressing the requirements and recommendations, progress has also been made to develop the children's guide and to produce specific mealtime plans for each young person. Currently the development plan does not detail how and when the service plans to achieve the aims making it difficult to prioritise the areas identified.

Quality assurance systems are in place; both the manager and an additional visitor monitor the care provided and audit documentation and records. At the time of

inspection six monthly summary reports of the identified strengths and areas for improvement have not been shared with HMCI. Regulation 34 monitoring does not currently include any formal or consistent systems to proactively seek the views of young people, their families and placing authorities in order to improve the quality of provision.

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.