

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 children's home is registered to provide both permanent residency and short-stay breaks for up to eight children and young people who have complex learning disabilities and associated communication and behavioural needs.

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**.

This service continues to have a positive impact on developing young people's personal, social growth and independent life skills. Young people consistently achieve good outcomes in their development, well-being and safety. The promotion of equality and personalisation is evident in practice and documentation. Each young person is valued, treated fairly and is supported to reach their potential. These views are ratified by parents and placing authorities. Comments include; 'This home treats all the young people as individuals meeting their individual and complex needs', and 'the service is perfect; they have done their absolute best for my son and I would give them a gold star'.

Young people benefit from well-planned admission into the home. The manager and staff team carry out detailed assessments of each young person and work in partnership with parents and other agencies. Young people receive a tailor made transition which meets their individual needs effectively.

Young people's health, education and safeguarding needs are identified, understood and fully met. Staff diligently monitor young people and respond appropriately to ensure their safety and well-being. A recommendation has been made to enhance the current recording system for individual risk assessments.

Young people benefit from an experienced, knowledgeable and stable staff team and as a result positive relationships are quickly established and maintained. Regular supervision and training ensure that young people are cared for by staff with suitable expertise and skill. A recommendation has been made relating to the manager

receiving copies of his supervision records.

The home is well organised and managed. The manager and team leaders are focused on developing the service provided to the benefit of young people. They have implemented a monthly review of the provision and as a result have a good understanding of the strengths and areas for further development. Action has already been undertaken and improvements are being sustained.

Requirements have been set relating to more formal consultation by the manager and ensuring that independent visits occur at the time when young people are present in the home.

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
33 (2001)	ensure that the person carrying out Regulation 33 visits shall interview, with their consent and in private, such of the children accommodated there, in order to form an opinion of the standard of care provided in the home. This relates to ensuring visits are consistently carried out at a time when young people are present in the home (Regulation 33 (4)(a))	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))	01/11/2012

Recommendations

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

- ensure that a record is kept in the home of each supervision session held for the Registered Manager (NMS 19.5)
- ensure that children's records contribute fully to an understanding of the child's life. This relates specifically to ensuring that risk assessments can be easily located in young people's files. (NMS 22)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people enjoy their time in a service specifically designed to meet their complex behaviour and communication needs. This year young people continue to settle well into their environment and as a result incidents of self-injurious behaviour and anxiety have continued to reduce. Some young people have improved their sleep pattern and been making consistent progress in making choices, resulting in improved well-being.

Most young people have become more confident at managing changes in their routine and undertaking new challenges and experiences. One young person is continuing to engage more in activities and has recently started to attend a regular horse-riding class. Another young person is becoming more confident in group situations and has enjoyed attending an achievement ceremony and disco. Young people who have previously isolated themselves have started to tolerate and at times enjoy being in a group situation alongside peers. These occasions are well supported by staff and therefore each young person is kept safe and comfortable in their environment and interactions with others.

Some young people who have experienced periods of emotional distress and crisis have received excellent care and support. As a result, their behaviours have been stabilised allowing young people to gain greater control over feelings of anxiety and be able to continue to make developmental progress. Young people respond well to the calm, caring and structured approach and routines.

Young people have good attendance at school and have received positive reports for their attainments. One young person is rightly proud of their recent achievement of two gold medals for sporting activities at a national disability competition.

Staff use communication aids well to support young people to understand what to expect from certain situations and to prepare them to cope with change. Some young people have been able to successfully have a vaccination and visit an external hairdresser; previously these activities have been strongly refused. As a result the young person's health and well-being is promoted.

Staff support young people, appropriate to their age, ability and understanding, to develop practical skills such as personal self-care and daily living skills. For some young people this means they are learning to shop and cook meals for themselves and for others they are able to make more meaningful and consistent choices, and display greater patience and tolerance during a mealtime. Young people are developing in this area and this is contributing to enhancing their self-esteem and preparing them for the transition to adult life.

Quality of care

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

Young people benefit from good supportive relationships from a staff team that are caring and compassionate. Interactions between young people are carefully

monitored and supported to enable each person to feel safe and comfortable. Young people demonstrate through their demeanour and relationship with staff that they are happy and content. This view is validated by parents and social workers.

Admissions and transitions are well planned and implemented. The manager carries out detailed assessments of young people's needs and works in partnership with families and key agencies. As a result, young people and their families are practically and emotionally prepared through individually tailored arrangements. One parent speaks very highly of the support and advocacy her son was given by the manager during transition to adult services.

There has been a notable improvement in the information recorded in young people's individual care plans. These documents now provide more detail about the young people's assessed needs and are consistent with formal placement plans and admission criteria. Staff can clearly describe the key aims for each young person's placement. Monthly summary reports are compiled about each young person and the staff team have started to use this information to identify short and long-term aims for each placement. Regular reports are produced which focus on evaluating young people's placement and the progress they are making. Each young person has a number of key workers who are responsible for ensuring their care and support needs are met. Key workers meet regularly to review any arising needs and update support plans. Young people's wishes are taken into account when drawing up support and care plans.

Young people are provided with good support and provision to maintain a healthy lifestyle. Individual dietary needs and personal preferences are catered for, and young people are provided with wholesome and nutritious food. Young people's physical and emotional health is very closely monitored and any arising needs are promptly shared with parents and health professionals. As a result, specialist services are identified and young people receive the appropriate support to meet their needs. Arrangements for dealing with medication, first aid and emergency interventions are safely managed and carried out by appropriately trained staff. Team leaders have devised a robust system for monitoring and auditing medication coming into and leaving the home and also in training staff. Regular assessments of staff competence ensure that managers have a good understanding of individual training needs and areas for development.

Staff work in partnership with parents and educational establishments to ensure a consistent approach is achieved. Effective communication between all parties ensures key messages about the care and well-being of the young person are properly addressed. The home uses the information gained to ensure consistency and this improves outcomes for young people.

Staff skilfully interact with young people using a range of communication methods, including symbols, photographs, schedule charts, story boards, objects of reference and signing. These alternative forms of communication are used to illicit young people's views on menus, activities, clothing, purchasing new games and to find out how they are feeling. Staff observe young people's non-verbal communication and

are vigilant to any changes in their presentation. They proactively distract young people and reassure them using a sensitive approach.

The home provides a safe and pleasant environment in which young people enjoy their stays. The accommodation is provided in a number of smaller units which enables both group and individual space depending on each young person's required needs. Staff place an emphasis on ensuring that young people have a positive experience during their stay in the home. There is a focus on young people choosing their favoured activities and undoubtedly they enjoy the experiences. Managers are currently addressing ways to ensure that all activities have a developmental focus as well as being enjoyable and fun.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

The routines and structure to each day support young people in feeling safe and comfortable in their surroundings. Young people demonstrate feeling secure in their relationships with staff and parents and placing authorities say that safety is given a high priority in the home. Staff promote positive behaviours by consistently implementing strategies as recorded on individual behaviour support plans. These documents have been developed over the past six months and provide staff with clear guidance and advice about how to promote positive behaviour and manage any incidents of challenge. There is a focus on distraction, deflection, de-escalation and encouragement. These techniques are implemented successfully in practice and keep young people safe.

Staff are regularly trained in behaviour management and in techniques of physical restraint. As a result, sanctions are not used and the use of physical intervention is minimal. Practices tend to utilise breakaway techniques and low intervention holds in order to disengage safely from a situation. The manager and team leaders have developed a system to monitor and analyse all behaviour incidents. This information is proving useful when evaluating individual techniques and to provide other agencies with a clear understanding of young people's arising needs.

Staff are knowledgeable about the particular diverse needs of the young people who use the service and are vigilant in their approach. They successfully implement preventative measures in practice to minimise and manage any vulnerability. Activity and environmental risk assessments are clear and up to date. Risks related to each individual young people are currently recorded in a number of different areas in case files. This could make it difficult for new or agency staff to easily extract the relevant information, however, in practice new staff always work alongside experienced support staff.

Staff receive regular training in safeguarding and they recognise particular vulnerabilities relating to the needs of young people with disabilities. Staff are currently looking at ways to enable a young person to have greater personal freedom within the local community. Risk management meetings with safeguarding agencies

have been held to agree strategies and develop appropriate protocols. In practice, risk-taking activities such as going missing are not behaviours displayed by the young people accessing this service.

The service has a sound recruitment process, which ensures all necessary checks are completed before a member of staff starts work. The manager has confirmation that the agency used to supply them with staff has carried out all the recruitment checks required. This protects young people from having contact with unsuitable people. There are sound health and safety systems in place to ensure the on-going maintenance of the physical environment; this includes regular fire safety checks and practice drills.

Leadership and management

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

The Registered Manager and team leaders are enthusiastic in their role and have a good understanding of where the home needs to develop. There is a genuine commitment to developing staff so that they more fully understand their role and responsibilities and take a greater ownership for their work. Over the past six months staff have received coaching and support in record keeping; as a result there has been a notable improvement in young people's individual care and behaviour plans. This is very positive in terms of staff development and subsequent quality of care for the young people.

Since the last inspection the internal management team have devised more focus to their management meetings. They have evaluated and analysed issues relating to staffing, young people, the environment and trends. As a result, areas for development have been identified and a monthly improvement plan written. This determines areas for improvement and states clear actions. This is helping to drive forward improvement.

The staff team are appropriately trained to support young people with complex and diverse needs. Training is regularly refreshed to ensure standards are maintained and reflects current practices. The staff team speak positively of the support they receive from team leaders and the manager. Regular team meetings, appraisals, and supervisions are well attended and focus on developing staff in order to improve the service delivered to young people. Improvements have been made to these systems to enable staff to be more reflective about their own practice and set clear measurable targets for self-development. A previous requirement relating to providing the manager with regular supervision has been suitably addressed. However, he does not receive copies of the minutes of the actual meetings.

Young people and their families are provided with a range of visual information prior to admission to the home. Young people are provided with their own individual booklet containing photographs and symbols. Information clearly explains the purpose of the service and guides young people and their families through processes, such as making a complaint.

There are records of regular monitoring visits under Regulation 33 of the Children's Homes Regulations and there is now evidence that staff and their parents are consulted during these visits. However, visits tend to occur during the school day and therefore provide limited opportunity to consult formally with young people or observe the care provided. The Registered Manager undertakes Regulation 34 checks on a monthly basis and has provided Ofsted with a six monthly summary of information demonstrating suitable analysis of trends and patterns.

Regular communication takes place between the home, parents, and social workers and strengthens opportunities for staff to promptly act on any arising issues or changing requirements. This is a positive approach and ensures young people's individual needs are met. However, there is not currently a system in place whereby the manager formally seeks the views of parents and placing authorities in order to improve the overall quality of provision or in the development of the service.

Young people's files are stored securely and contain documents, which are relevant and contribute to an understanding of their time in the home. There has been one notifiable event since the last inspection; this was reported appropriately to Ofsted and relevant agencies without delay.

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.