

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**.

Young people benefit from visiting and living in this home. Good quality care is provided and young people are safe, protected and supported to develop. Young people have excellent relationships with staff who clearly care about them and provide a warm and nurturing approach. The staff team's knowledge of the young people they care for is noteworthy, enhanced by the strong, constructive relationships that are fostered with families and professionals. As such, there is well-planned care and effective partnership working to ensure continuity of approach and development of young people.

Safeguarding young people is given a high priority. Staff recognise the diverse needs of each young person and are proactive at supporting their development while diligently protecting them. Health and safety policies, systems and risk assessments are effectively implemented in practice.

Feedback from families and placing authorities participating in the inspection is wholeheartedly positive. Stakeholders are confident of the service provided and feel young people actively benefit from their stays. Families and social workers can see young people making progress and feel this is due to the quality of care they receive during their time in the home. One parent said, 'My son is relaxed and settled at the home; they promote his development and independence and I'm really glad I made the decision for him to go there.' Another family say, 'My children are happy to go to the home, it is a safe environment which meets their needs. The care my children receive is excellent and the activities and interactions with staff are equally as good.'

Requirements and recommendations have been made to enhance the on-going good work of the home. The home has been asked to address the clarity of information in the Statement of Purpose and ensure it is clear, unambiguous, and specific to the home. The staff team report feeling supported in their role, however, the regularity of formal supervision for some has decreased this year. Recommendations have been made regarding the Registered Manager's supervision records and ensuring completion of the home's plans regarding moving a young person to the flat to increase their independence.

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
5 (2001)	keep under review and revise the Statement of Purpose and the children's guide. In particular, ensure that the documents explicitly explain how the home provides for short break and long term care and the management of emergency placements (Regulation 5 (a))	07/02/2014
27 (2001)	ensure that all persons employed to work in the home (a) receive appropriate supervision and appraisal. (Regulation 27 (4)(a))	07/02/2014

Recommendations

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

- ensure that 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. Ensure that such measures are only used where agreed with the responsible authority and, if appropriate the parents. Ensure that such restrictions for one child do not impose similar restrictions on other children (NMS 10.4)
- ensure that a written or electronic record is kept by the home detailing the time and date and length of each supervision held for each member of staff, including the registered person. In particular, ensure that copies of the RM 's supervisions are provided to him and a copy available in the home. (NMS 19.5)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people thrive on the nurture, care and well planned support they receive. As such, young people make measurable progress in many aspects of their lives. This progress has steadily enhanced and been sustained over time. Staff, families and placing authorities recognise the achievements young people have made and are able to give many examples of how they have developed. Some families say that young people are also taking the skills they have learnt back to their home environment.

Young people are developing emotional resilience, self-esteem and security. Examples include young people now being able to stay away from home with confidence, sleep in their own bed and begin to understand their individual circumstances and why they live in the home. One placing authority confirms this saying, 'The staff have actively helped with the young person's understanding of their disability and being looked after, and this has helped the young person to feel better about themselves.'

Young people's independence and autonomy is developing within their own individual abilities and needs. Some young people are now using cutlery and sitting at the table to eat meals; other young people help with chores around the home such as shopping, cooking and keeping their area tidy. One young person is proud of being able to visit the local community on their own and be responsible for spending their pocket money.

As young people's confidence, security and communication has developed, this in turn has positively influenced their behaviour. Well-planned visits underpinned by structure, routine and support has helped some young people to feel less anxious, resulting in a reduction in the use of medication and physical intervention. Young people are developing their social skills and communication with others. Most young people find this very difficult and activities, interaction, and relationships have to be specifically engineered and carefully managed. However, progression is made and some young people are now able to spend increased time with other young people without incident and actually enjoy their company.

Young people are developing skills to maintain a healthy lifestyle; this includes increasing their ability to make choices of healthy options at meal and snack time, learning about epilepsy, and the reasons for taking medication. Some young people have increased the range of foods and textures they will taste and now tolerate and/or enjoy. Young people are supported to be active during their stay. For some young people this includes daily walks in the local area and working out to an individualised exercise programme, while others go horse-riding, swimming and play on the trampoline.

Young people who live in the home benefit from maintaining positive relationships with their family and others who are important to them. Family and friends are encouraged to visit the home and young people also enjoy regular outings, holidays, visits and phone calls in line with their individual needs and care plan.

Quality of care

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

The home has developed a partnership approach to planning each young person's placement with families and professionals being fully involved and their views central to the process. This is supported by written care and support plans that are detailed and personalised for each young person. As such, young people receive bespoke care which promotes their development and achievement. The staff team have an in-depth understanding of each young person's needs and strive to ensure that these are met in practice.

Key workers act with families and placing authorities to identify clear and agreed aims for each young person's placement. Overarching aims are developed into measurable goals which are individualised and achievable. The staff team are aware of young people's goals and aim to support these during each of their visits. A social worker said, 'There are clear expectations for young people, but these are done at the young person's level. I see staff really engaging and interacting appropriately, knowing when to intervene and when to back off.' Senior staff monitor the quality of record keeping and ensure that plans are accurate, up-to-date and sufficiently detailed.

The home advocates strongly on behalf of the young person to ensure their best interests. There is effective planning to ensure the good quality delivery of admission, transition and on-going visits of young people. The service is responsive to young people's changing needs and will amend visit packages accordingly to ensure that young people experiences a positive and beneficial short break.

The staff team help young people to understand the value of learning. Achievements are celebrated and rewarded and staff regularly liaise with young people's schools to ensure a consistent approach and shared understanding. As such, attendance and achievement within each young person's individual ability is good.

The home promotes activities that support young people's learning and personal development. Activities are individualised and include opportunities for young people to engage in their local community, develop their sensory needs, talents, hobbies and interests; because of this, young people appear to enjoy visiting and living in the home.

Young people benefit from good support and attention to maintain a healthy lifestyle. This includes the safe administration of medication, provision of nutritious food, the development of exercise plans, and opportunities to engage in activities that develop emotional wellbeing. The staff team closely monitor young people's presentation and ensure that any emerging or on-going health needs are responded to with care and skill. Personal care needs are supported in a manner which respects young people and promotes their dignity and privacy.

Staff confidently support and assist young people to communicate; they are patient in their approach, allowing time for young people to understand, make choices and express their needs. Objects of reference, individualised symbols, electronic communication aids and signing are used as necessary to help young people develop. Good use is made of observing young people and staff are alert to monitoring their responses and non-verbal cues regarding their likes, dislikes and emotions. As such, young people are listened to, supported to make choices and express themselves.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Through the good relationships formed by staff, young people are relaxed and demonstrate feeling confident, safe and secure; comments made by families and professionals concur with this view. The staff team are diligent at ensuring young people's protection; they recognise and respond to times when young people are distressed and/or anxious and are equipped with the skills to appropriately manage challenging behaviours. A placing authority said, 'Staff are very aware of a young person's vulnerabilities and safety issues. They have worked out a risk assessment that protects but does not disable.' Young people benefit from a consistent and well-planned approach to supporting their behavioural development. The staff team collaborate closely with families, schools, social workers and professionals to identify possible reasons for young people's behaviours and agree support strategies together.

In general, behaviour relating to bullying is not an issue of concern for the young people. However, some young people may behave in ways that result in harm to themselves or others and may damage the environment. Individual support plans are in place and describe key triggers to unexpected behaviour, providing detailed guidance on how to de-escalate these and support young people proactively. The home has successfully prevented young people going missing and/or absent without permission by helping them to develop increased independence in their local community. At times, social stories are used to reinforce strategies and help young people to understand how to stay safe. Physical intervention is used and staff receive regular training to apply this. Records show interventions are appropriate, using the least restrictive hold and for a minimal amount of time to make the area and young person safe. In general, the vast majority of incidents are handled using non-restrictive holds and positive techniques.

Young people accessing the service have a wide range of varying needs, with all requiring direct support to ensure their welfare and safety. The staff team carefully plan visits and the environment to ensure that young people are compatible and their needs can be met safely. Due to the young people's complex needs, it is necessary for safety reasons to restrict access to some parts of the building. Young people's individual plans document the assessment of this. The home has successfully worked with young people to reduce the reliance and need for some of these restrictions.

Currently, one resident experiences an imposed restriction on their access to an area which is necessary for another resident. However, the home is aware of this and is due to implement a planned change of living accommodation which will remove the imposed restriction.

The staff team maintain a safe environment by vigilance, good quality risk assessment and management, safer recruitment practice and the robust application of the requisite checks of health and safety and fire safety. Young people have individual personal evacuation plans and receive support to help understand how to respond in the event of an emergency or sounding fire alarm. Staff receive regular training in safeguarding and demonstrate good understanding and management of the vulnerabilities relating to the specific needs of young people with disabilities. One parent says, 'I'm confident my son is cared for and because of this I don't worry about him during his stay'.

Leadership and management

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

Young people benefit from a home that is well managed and led. The home's leadership team are committed to and focused on improving the quality of care and securing positive outcomes for young people. The Registered Manager, team leaders and staff team work well together. There is a range of skills, experience and expertise among the team which effectively complements each other and provides a learning environment for less experienced personnel.

General staffing levels are good and adjusted accordingly to meet the individual needs of the young people. Agency staff are used; however, this is alongside the permanent members of the team to ensure consistency. Since the last inspection, the rota has been changed to provide improved matching of staff to individual young people. In addition, team leaders work both on shift and also supernumery to the shift in order to provide coaching opportunities, observation and support.

The Statement of Purpose requires review. It contains a summary of the elements required by regulation; however, it is a generic document containing limited personalisation. It does not explicitly explain the purpose of the home regarding the provision of short break, long stay and emergency placements and how each of these separate functions are provided for in practice. In reality, the home manages each of these areas well and those accessing the service and placing young people there are clear about the function.

There has been some sickness and absence among the leadership team this year. This has affected the provision of regular formal supervision for each member of the team. Supplementary systems were put in place but these are too informal and do not allow for sufficient reflection of practice. The Registered Manager confirms he receives regular supervision. However, this cannot be tested as he does not receive or keep copies in the home of the record of his supervision.

Monitoring of the service takes place according to regulation and the home's management team meet regularly to identify areas for development and agree an improvement plan. There has been positive focus on developing the quality of written documentation and ensuring key workers are more accountable for this. As such, there is an on-going improvement in the professionalism and confidence of the staff team and quality of young people's records.

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 the inspection of children's homes.