

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Dennis Bradley
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home provides residential care for up to eight children and young people usually offering short breaks, but sometimes they can stay for a few weeks. Children and young people who use the home have a learning disability and associated challenging behaviour categorised as mild to moderate. The local authority owns and operates this setting.

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 home provides good, consistent and well-planned care resulting in good outcomes for young people. Young people make good progress in their placements. In particular they receive good support and encouragement to become more independent. Staff are also very good at making sure young people's achievements are celebrated. The young people are comfortable in their placements and this is made possible by the caring atmosphere created by staff. A parent said, 'It is such a happy place which my child enjoys going to'.

Staff actively seek, and take into account, young people's wishes and feelings about how they should be cared for. Young people benefit from planned and consistent interactions with staff who care about their welfare. Good staffing levels contribute to the personalised care and support that the young people receive. Young people feel safe and staff are clearly committed to using their knowledge and skills effectively to keep them safe.

The management team ensures the home is managed efficiently and effectively. They understand the home's strengths and areas for development. Professionals who work with the home said the services it provides are either excellent or good. A social worker said that the staff, 'go the extra mile' for the young people and their families.

Most of the shortfalls identified relate to weaknesses in record keeping. For example, staff do not always keep suitable records of incidents when they use physical

restraint on young people, and they do not keep all young people's risk assessments up to date. Other areas for development relate to the arrangements for monitoring and improving the quality of care provided in the home, and ensuring the home's Statement of Purpose is accurate.

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 visits by the registered provider take place at least once a month. (Regulation 33(3))	28/11/2012
4 (2001)	ensure the Statement of Purpose for the home includes details of all the matters listed in Schedule 1, in particular that it clearly describes the types of placements currently provided by the home. (Regulation 4(1))	25/10/2012

Recommendations

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

- ensure the home implements risk assessments that are up to date (NMS 4.5)
- ensure if any staff in the home resort to any measure of control or restraint this is carefully and clearly recorded with full details by the staff involved (Volume 5, statutory guidance, paragraph 2.91)
- ensure the home has a suitable record of the recruitment and vetting checks which have been carried out on staff (NMS 6.3)
- ensure copies of reports completed in respect of any review of the matters set out in Schedule 6, and of the quality of care provided in the home, are sent to Ofsted within 28 days of completion. It will be good practice for these reports to be completed at six monthly intervals. (Volume 5, statutory guidance, paragraph 3.14.)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

The home has a collaborative approach to care planning and the young people and

their families are actively involved in this process. Effective planning during the admission process helps ensure young people receive consistency and continuity of care, provided by staff who are well informed about their individual needs, preferences and routines. Young people also benefit from being supported by key workers who maintain good links with their families, schools and health professionals. For example, key workers visit young people's families each month to review their care and progress. A parent said, 'I like the way I have monthly meetings with my child's keyworker in case we have any problems or issues'.

Young people are making good progress in developing their self-care skills and independence and this helps build their confidence and self-esteem. For example, they are all working towards meeting specific targets that staff have agreed with them and which are tailored to their individual needs and capabilities. Young people can also have their say about, for example, how they are cared for, and what they want to eat and do during their stay. Staff use a variety of methods to enable each young person to express their views and feelings. For example, menus are available in a pictorial format for young people who are unable to read. Staff ensure any specific dietary needs of the young people are identified and catered for during their stays at the home.

Good staffing levels help ensure young people receive personalised support to meet their needs. They are able to access a good range of stimulating activities and pursue their individual interests and hobbies with staff support.

Young people's health and welfare is actively promoted by a team of staff who have the knowledge, skills and resources to meet their individual and diverse needs. The management team ensures staff have good access to relevant training. For example, specialist nurses provide staff with training in working with young people with challenging behaviours and how to care for children with epilepsy. A social worker for one young person described how staff had used recent training on intensive interaction, 'to good effect' when caring for them.

Young people have very good attendance at school which is supported by the routines of the home and the regular communication between the home and young people's schools. For example the home provides transport for young people attending one of the local schools. This enables staff to have daily contact with the school about the young people's needs and progress.

Quality of care

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

Staff are good at developing positive relationships with the young people. They also ensure there is a warm, secure and caring environment within which young people are able to feel safe and relax.

Staff ensure the diverse needs of the young people are clearly recorded in their

individual short break care plans. Staff make sure they ask young people for their views and feelings about their day-to-day care. Young people's views are also sought about the running of the home. For example, regular young people's meetings are held where they have been asked for their views about matters such as the introduction of a reward system and plans for a summer fete. Young people have also been actively involved in the selection process for new staff.

There are clear procedures regarding how to make a complaint. It is good that the young people are able to access information about how to complain in different formats to meet their diverse communication needs. The home has received no complaints since the last inspection.

Staff work constructively with young people's parents and carers and they have regular contact by telephone, monthly key worker visits and, where appropriate, through the use of communication books for each young person. This helps to ensure continuity of care and appropriate outcomes for the young people. A social worker said that one of the good things about the home is that it has an 'open door policy' for all parents. Parents confirmed they can talk to staff about the care of their child as often as they wish, and that staff keep them informed about their progress.

Young people experience a good range of activities within the home and in its garden and outdoor play area. For example, there is a large play room equipped with a variety of games and toys, and a computer room equipped with five personal computers for the use of the young people. Staff are also good at supporting young people in accessing activities and facilities in the community, such as visits to local shops, museums and cinemas. This helps the young people to develop their social skills, self-confidence and self-esteem.

There are good arrangements for storing, administering and monitoring the young people's medication. For example, only staff who have had training in safety with medicines can administer medication to young people. Also, care staff are trained in emergency first aid should a young person need this. Parents confirmed that their child's health needs are met when they stay at the home. Staff are innovative in the ways they promote young people's health and well-being. For example, they use a traffic light system to help them understand which foods are healthy. This supports the young people to make informed choices about what they eat. All the professionals who completed a survey strongly agree that young people access appropriate health care.

Young people enjoy staying in a comfortable, spacious and pleasant environment. The home is a purpose built, large bungalow situated in a residential estate. There are good arrangements for ensuring the home is well maintained and it is furnished and decorated to a good standard.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people said they feel safe living at the home and there are satisfactory arrangements in place to keep them safe. Staff try hard to protect and promote young people's welfare and they are clear about their roles and responsibilities in doing so. They take prompt and appropriate action when young people are at risk and ensure the home's safeguarding procedures and risk assessments are implemented. However, the risk assessment for one young person had not been updated to cover a potential risk that had recently been identified. Because of this, staff may not have all the information they need about how to meet the young person's needs and keep them safe.

There have been no occasions when a young person has gone missing from the home. Staff's vigilance and the good levels of supervision they provide young people help ensure this does not happen. Staff have a good understanding of the potentially harmful effect of bullying behaviour and there is a clear policy of zero tolerance of bullying. There are no recorded incidents of bullying having occurred.

Staff implement positive behaviour strategies to support young people to manage their emotions and anxieties. Young people are rewarded and praised for positive behaviour and staff try to enable them understand the impact of their behaviour on others. The home has introduced a scheme that provides incentives for young people to behave well and this has led to a reduction in the use of sanctions for negative behaviour. When staff do use sanctions these are relevant and appropriate. Staff said they only use physical restraint on young people as a last resort, and only after they have used the de-escalation techniques they have been trained to use. When they do use physical restraint on young people it is to keep them or others safe. However, one record of such an incident does not clearly demonstrate this. Also some records do not clearly describe the actual method of restraint used by staff. Consequently, it is not always clearly evident in the records that the use of physical restraint on young people was proportionate or in line with the home's own behaviour management policy.

The Council has clear and effective staff recruitment and selection procedures. These help make sure only suitable people are employed to care for the young people. However, the home does not maintain a sufficiently comprehensive record to demonstrate staff have undergone robust recruitment and vetting checks.

Young people live in a home that is safe and secure. For example, the home's fire procedures are implemented and there are good systems to identify and minimise any risks or hazards. Staff use each young person's individual risk management strategies effectively in order to safeguard them and promote their welfare.

Leadership and management

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

In the main, the home's Statement of Purpose provides clear and accessible information about how it operates. However, the document does not accurately describe the types of placements currently provided by the home. Consequently this

information is not readily accessible to parents who may be considering using the service.

The management team ensures all staff working at the home consistently follows its policies and procedures and understands their roles and responsibilities. There is also a young people's guide to the home which tells them what the home is like and includes important information, such as how to complain or contact an independent advocate. The guide is available in formats appropriate to the communication needs of the young people who use the service. For example, there is an audio version for young people who cannot read so that they can access the information contained in the guide.

The manager of the home is skilled, experienced and appropriately qualified. The manager keeps up-to-date with developments in legislation and care practice and uses forums such as team meetings to share these with staff. They provide effective leadership for the staff team, enabling them to provide good outcomes for the young people. The manager ensures that the home has a clear ethos and staff work with commonly understood objectives. The manager took effective action to address the recommendation made following the previous inspection of the home. Where appropriate, transition plans have now been completed for young people and these should help them prepare for their transition into adulthood and adult services.

The manager has a system in place to regularly monitor the home's records to identify any concerns and to improve the quality of the care provided. However, they do not send a copy of the reports of these reviews to Ofsted within 28 days of completion. There is also an external quality monitoring programme that includes visits to the home to check the quality of care provided and the welfare of the young people staying there. However, on one occasion, this monitoring has not been carried out at least once a month as required by regulation. These shortfalls have minimal impact on young people's outcomes, however they do mean that monitoring is not consistently implemented.

The majority of staff are skilled and experienced and all either have a relevant qualification or are undertaking training to achieve one. Staff demonstrate a commitment to meeting the complex and diverse needs of the young people who stay at the home. They receive good support and supervision which enables them to have a good understanding of young people's needs and how to support them and keep them safe. Staff also have access to good training opportunities in caring for children and young people.

Staffing levels are good and enable staff to spend time meeting the individual needs of the young people. Regular staff meetings and good handover arrangements between shifts help ensure there is effective communication within the staff team. This helps staff to keep up to date with any changes to young people's needs or circumstances.

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.