

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Janet Hunnam
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This children's home is operated by the local authority. The service is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to seven young people with learning disabilities and physical disabilities. It provides care for up to four young people under short break arrangements and a further three young people may live at the home.

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 **outstanding**.

Young people receive highly individualised support and make significant progress in a safe and caring environment. Led by an effective, forward thinking Registered Manager with outstanding leadership skills, the cohesive, skilful and experienced staff team deliver consistent care enabling young people to improve their behaviour, social skills and independence skills.

Positive, trusting relationships allow young people to develop confidence and benefit from the support provided. Staff demonstrate an exceptionally good understanding of young people's individual personalities, interests, strengths and needs and young people flourish in their placement. Young people's needs and their welfare are central to all aspects of how the home operates. Staff actively encourage young people to make choices in their daily lives and promote young people's independence at every opportunity.

Excellent safeguarding practice is in place at the home. Staff monitor young people closely to ensure their safety and react promptly and appropriately in all situations to protect young people. Staff's detailed knowledge of young people and their specific vulnerabilities together with their considerable skill and experience results in successful management of challenging behaviour contributing to young people's safety and well-being.

A comprehensive quality assurance system is in place to monitor the quality of care

provided for young people at the home. However, the report of this monitoring received by Ofsted does not accurately reflect the quality of internal monitoring and its impact on the quality of care. Staff are very well trained and supported to undertake their roles. However, the recording of staff supervision does not include the duration of the supervision session. These shortfalls do not impact on the quality of care or the welfare of young people at 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
34 (2001)	ensure that a system is established and maintained for monitoring the matters set out in Schedule 6 at appropriate intervals and improving the quality of care provided in the children's home. The registered person shall supply to HMCI a report in respect of any review conducted by him for this purpose. (Regulation 34 (1)(a)(b), Regulation 34(2))	25/10/2013

Recommendations

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

- 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. The record is signed by the supervisor and the member of staff at the end of the supervision. (NMS 19.5)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **outstanding**.

Young people receive excellent levels of care and support and as a result make considerable progress. Many young people experience significant individual growth from accessing the home. Young people benefit from individualised, consistent support, which helps them develop confidence and self-esteem.

Detailed health plans clearly identify young people's health needs. Staff meet each young person's health needs to a very high standard and are proactive in promoting good health. A parent commented that a young person's 'acceptance of healthier,

more varied food is really valuable'. The complex health needs of some young people are closely monitored with specialist support from external health professionals ensuring young people receive appropriate care.

Staff fully recognise the value of education and provide effective support for young people to attend school regularly. They liaise with schools to share practice and strategies to consistently meet young people's specific needs and promote their growth and development. Good communication and links between the home and school supports educational outcomes and ensures key information about young people's day-to-day lives is shared to benefit young people.

Young people access a wide range of activities within the home and the wider community enabling them to extend their social experiences and develop their skills and confidence. The home recognises they have the opportunity to facilitate more adventurous opportunities such as an overnight camping trip and an excursion using a train and hovercraft. Staff support young people to take appropriate risks, knowing their vulnerabilities. They plan sensitively to provide new experiences taking into account their personal interests. Young people have horse riding lessons, go to the theatre and music concerts and participate in positive activities within the home.

Young people benefit from staff's enthusiasm and commitment in supporting them to develop independence skills appropriate to their levels of ability. The home has an 'independence evening' once a week when young people plan and cook their own meal. Staff support young people to develop a range of daily living skills in small, achievable steps. Young people make excellent progress. A parent commented that the home has 'helped the young person's independence immensely' and another reported that a young person 'is learning to do more things themselves'. Staff are on hand to provide support when young people require their help but they also recognise when young people are capable of doing tasks for themselves and provide opportunities for them to make a positive contribution to the home.

Quality of care

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

Young people thrive in the home as a result of nurturing, caring relationships with staff, which provide them with a secure base of stability and trust. Interactions are supportive and respectful and based on staff knowing the young people extremely well. Parents report that young people look forward to their stay so that it is 'obvious the whole set up is really good'. Another commented that a young person 'loves coming to The Bungalow. It has become part of their routine and that is because of the excellent care they are given during their visits'.

Staff are highly skilled in managing the behaviours of young people and promoting positive relations. Staff demonstrate exceptionally good understanding of young people's individual personalities, interests, strengths and needs. Consequently, young people make progress in improving their behaviour. A parent commented 'staff

understand the young person's needs very well' and another stated that staff 'meet the young person's very complex needs to a very high standard'.

A culture of promoting young people's choice is evident. Using a variety of communication methods, staff enable young people to put forward their views and decide for themselves on day-to-day matters such as activities and snacks of their choice. The home is further developing ways of enabling young people with communication difficulties to state their preferences and express their wishes, feelings and needs. Advocates meet young people regularly to convey their views. Key workers ensure young people are able to communicate their views and young people have the opportunity of giving feedback on the service through regular questionnaires.

Highly individualised and detailed care plans outline all young people's needs. These plans provide a clear, comprehensive and up to date description of young people, identifying their specific vulnerabilities, cultural requirements, care needs and distinctive strategies for meeting their needs. The plans include clear goals that young people are working towards, enabling them to develop and make progress. Each young person's identity is valued. Staff know each young person's specific needs and provide excellent support to meet their individual requirements.

Young people enjoy a healthy lifestyle and staff encourage their understanding of eating a healthy diet and enjoying physical activities. The home provides nutritious, home cooked meals with a new 'Nutrition Champion' being appointed to raise awareness at the home of healthy eating. Staff are very well trained, competent and confident in meeting young people's, often complex, health needs. The system for administering medication is robust ensuring the safety and welfare of young people.

Young people live in a welcoming, spacious, homely environment. It is very well maintained with new flooring, curtains, pictures and redecoration. Bedrooms for young people who are resident full time at the home are personalised and reflect their personalities giving them a sense of identity and belonging at the home. The home provides a nurturing and relaxing environment. The external play area is bright, safe and attractive providing opportunities for young people to have fun outside.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Safeguarding young people is of paramount importance at the home. Efficient and effective systems are in place to protect young people and promote their welfare. A parent commented that the home 'is safe and secure' and another that their child 'is safe and happy to be there'. Staff are competent and appropriately trained in safeguarding procedures. A social worker confirmed that the home is very good at referring any concerns. Any issues of a child protection nature are managed appropriately, ensuring the safety of the young person. Close monitoring of young

people with excellent levels of supervision and detailed risk assessments protect young people. Young people do not leave the home without permission.

Young people clearly trust staff who care for them. Staff have an excellent understanding and knowledge of young people. This enables them to identify triggers and warning signs of negative behaviour and react appropriately in line with young people's risk assessments to support them and prevent behaviour escalating. Comprehensive risk assessments identify young people's vulnerabilities and protective factors to ensure their safety. Staff receive training in the use of physical intervention but they rarely use restraint. Only one incident requiring physical intervention is recorded since December 2012. This is testament to the skills and competence of the staff team who successfully de-escalate difficult situations. Staff rarely use sanctions as many of the young people have limited understanding. Incidents are well recorded and monitored by management.

Robust recruitment procedures safeguard young people and ensure that only appropriate adults care for young people. The home is rigorous in its approach to all matters of health and safety. All required tests and servicing take place including fire safety checks, training and drills to protect young people and staff within the home.

Leadership and management

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

A highly effective Registered Manager and deputy manager manage the home to an outstanding level. The Registered Manager manages the home and another of the local authority homes. She provides clear, forward-thinking leadership for the staff team and clearly understands the needs of the young people and the support and guidance staff require to meet their needs. The needs of young people are central to care practice, planning and development with all decisions focusing on their best interests and promoting their development and progress. A social worker commented that the Registered Manager is 'a very effective manager'. No formal complaints have been received by the home since 2007. A parent commented that the 'manager always listens to concerns and acts upon them'.

The home continually seeks to improve the service. Questionnaires are given to young people, parents, professionals and staff to obtain their views, which inform the Registered Manager's analysis of the home's strengths and weaknesses and the content of the development plan. The objectives in the development plan subsequently provide staff with targets in their annual appraisal, ensuring new initiatives to improve the service are implemented. Improvements since the last inspection include improvements to the environment, the recruitment of additional staff to provide more flexibility to meet the needs of young people and detailed activity plans to ensure young people are positively engaged with the wider community. No requirements or recommendations were made at the previous inspection.

The home's Statement of Purpose accurately reflects the services the home offers

and is updated regularly to ensure all information is current and accurate.

The home has a thorough and comprehensive quality assurance process for monitoring internal systems to maintain high quality care. The home sends Regulation 34 summary monitoring reports every six months to Ofsted but these reports do not cover all the matters set out in Schedule 6 of the Regulations. Monthly reports from an external visitor are of a high quality and add further value to the monitoring systems in place.

Staffing levels are high reflecting the complex needs of young people at the home. Forward planning and a flexible approach from staff ensure that young people receive the level of support they require to meet their needs and ensure they have positive experiences through activities to extend their social experiences. Additional staff have recently been recruited to reduce the need for agency staff and provide consistency of care for young people. Staff receive excellent levels of training, supervision and support. Staff say they feel very well supported to carry out their role through formal supervision, team meetings and informal, consistent guidance from management. Individual supervision takes place monthly with detailed recording. However, the records do not include the duration of the supervision session. A comprehensive training programme ensures staff receive excellent training and development opportunities to enhance and inform their care practice. A team day once a month enables staff to attend training together, which facilitates a consistent team approach to their care.

Communication between the experienced staff team and professionals, parents and carers is excellent. A social worker commented that staff are open and honest and a parent stated 'we have good communication'. Record keeping is of a high standard and contribute to a good understanding of young people's lives and ensures the needs of each young person are fully appreciated and addressed.

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.