

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Diana Waters
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Date of last inspection	31/01/2012
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home is managed by the local authority. It provides care and accommodation for up to 10 children and young people, aged from five to 17 years at any one time, who have a learning disability and who may also have a physical disability. The home also provides an overnight short breaks service.

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**.

The home provides a very good level of care for children and young people and outcomes are good. A stable and committed staff look after children well and parents and some children provide positive feedback to the service. The home is undergoing major refurbishment and respite breaks have continued throughout this period. Safeguarding policies and procedures are in place and an experienced staff team actively promote the safety and welfare of children.

There are some shortfalls in connection with incomplete employment checks which could potentially compromise children's safety, and the improvement of the fabric and furnishings of the home. The Registered Managers are aware of these areas and are committed to further improve outcomes for children and young people, and to provide a high-quality service.

Children and young people continue at the schools they regularly attend and staff support attendance by providing transport and liaising with the schools to ensure consistency for children and young people.

Internal and external management systems ensure that the home's performance is monitored, however limited communication from external managers potentially compromises prompt remedial action by the home's managers. Staff are supported by managers who are respected, provide good role models, are clearly child-centred, and motivated to provide a warm and welcoming environment for young people and

children on respite care. The experienced staff team are committed to provide a high quality of care and improve outcomes for the children.

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
26 (2001)	ensure that safer recruitment practices apply to all staff records and include telephone reference checks, checks on gaps in employment history and checks as far as reasonably practicable to ascertain reasons why staff left previous employment with children or vulnerable adults (Regulation 26.3)	31/08/2012
31 (2001)	continue with the building programme to ensure the building is suitable for the purposes of a children's home as set out in the statement of purpose.(Regulation 31(1))	30/11/2012

Recommendations

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

- extend the provision of a comfortable and homely environment, with particular regard to the bedroom decoration and the external spaces once the builders have completed the extensions to the building.(NMS 10)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

The home clearly recognises the individual needs of each young person. Staff are knowledgeable about the reasons why children and young people have been placed for respite care and take care to ensure young people's visits are enjoyable and stimulating. Good staffing levels are in place to enable children and young people to participate in a variety of activities and young people make and sustain warm relationships with staff and other young people which enables their stay to be successful. A parent reports 'my child likes going there ,they are very very helpful and supportive, they are accommodating whenever they can be and understand the needs of the children and parents'. Personalised care promotes individual identity. Consultation with young people and their parents enables individualised short break care planning to fit the needs of each young person. The plan is regularly reviewed.

Young people enjoy a healthy environment where health needs are well met by trained care staff.

Regular training is provided and staff liaise closely with other professionals and parents. Healthy meals are provided taking into consideration individual preferences and dietary needs.

Children and young people often arrive from school to the home and return to school the following day. During holiday periods parents transport young people and liaise well with staff. Staff promote multi-agency working with attendance at reviews, home diaries and visits to schools.

Leisure activities are provided both within and outside the home and staff are knowledgeable about facilities for their young people and other events that young people benefit from visiting. The staff are frequently on the lookout for facilities that enable young people to participate within the community. They liaise and train with the inclusive play team.

Children and young people receive warm positive and patient care, from an experienced and committed staff team, this promotes self-esteem. Young people develop daily living skills that help promote self-care and independence in small achievable steps.

Quality of care

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

The panel initially meet to ascertain which services are able to meet young people's needs. The management of the home then carefully consider referrals to make sure the home provides safe care for all children and young people and individual needs are met. Familiarisation visits are well planned and overnight stays are introduced when appropriate. The home carries out annual surveys to assess how children and young people, parents and carers view care and support from the service. Parents state they strongly agree that their views about their children's care are taken into account, and they are pleased with the care provided.

Each young person has an individual plan that helps staff to understand and manage behaviour. Training and diversionary techniques ensure physical restraint is kept to a minimum. Staff consistency, knowledge and clear strategies ensure young people experience competent care. Young people are matched to ensure compatible young people stay at the home at the same time and are helped to build positive peer relationships.

Positive handling is infrequent and staff are skilled in de-escalation techniques and alternative strategies. This is helped by a stable staff team who have cared for children and young people for many years and clearly understand the needs of young people who use the service.

The children and young people and their parents take part in decision making about their care and the running of the home, with key workers consulting individuals to gain views on the care provided. One complaint has been received since the last inspection and was resolved quickly.

Formal and informal support is available to staff and frequent contact with parents ensures concerns are addressed quickly and effectively.

Short breaks care plans are designed to meet children's and young people's individual needs. Staff have excellent relationships with children and young people and are skilled at interpreting young people's wishes and behaviour. Children and young people benefit from medical care delivered by trained and experienced staff.

All children and young people attend school and staff maintain contact with both school and parents, goals are shared to ensure young people are able to maximise their potential.

Equality and diversity are well understood by the staff team. Staff are enthusiastic about promoting the rights of young people to access community facilities and challenge others' perceptions of learning and physical disability.

The home is currently undergoing extensive building work to improve the physical environment and provide the space and adaptations needed. It is to the credit of the staff team, that despite the disruptive building projects, they maintain a strong commitment to provide continuity of care for children and young people throughout the busy summer holiday period. The phased aspects of the building work are well managed and the slight reduction in numbers has made it possible to continue to provide a respite service. Children and young people make good use of the external play space available in one unit and the external area in the other unit is scheduled for attention on completion of the current building work. Maintenance of the garden is subcontracted and greater attention to detail would enhance its general appearance and benefit young people. The essential building work programme is advancing well and the potential if all work is completed according to the schedule will considerably enhance the quality of the provision.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people's care plans and individual risk assessment contribute to protecting young people from harm. Staff are trained in safeguarding children procedures including specialist safeguarding disabled children and are clear about the home's whistle blowing policies. Care is taken to ensure practices are consistent to benefit each individual young person.

Positive and appropriate behaviour is encouraged by the staff team. Care is taken to match children and young people appropriately for the enjoyment of each young person's stay. As regular visitors, children and young people are familiar with the

home, the extensive but stable staff team and some other young people. Children and young people rarely receive sanctions or positive handling and a positive atmosphere is prevalent. Parents are pleased with the home and report children and young people enjoy their visits. Staff are vigilant and small changes in behaviour are noted and discussed to ensure all young people benefit from their visits.

No young people have gone missing from the home, however the home has a missing from home procedure and high levels of vigilance and planning for individual children when on external trips are evident.

The home is currently undergoing extensive building works and therefore attention to internal bedroom decorations are scheduled as part of this refurbishment. Innovative use of shared space to enable young people to continue to receive a service and the use of shared kitchen facilities, has despite the inevitable disruption and extra work, enabled staff to provide continuity of care to a vulnerable group of children and young people. The commitment of staff to overcome serious disruption and cheerfully continue to provide a respite care service is recognised through this inspection, greatly valued by parents and essential for young people.

The home has recruited three new casual staff and a job share manager since the last inspection. While most application forms, some interview notes, identity checks, Criminal Records Bureau references were available within the home, gaps exist both within the home's records and in records held outside the home that potentially compromise the safety of children.

Some staff employed by the service have not been robustly vetted and there are systemic shortfalls in vetting procedures of staff appointed which potentially impact upon the safeguarding of children. The local authority has in place procedures, to employ new staff, which follow safer recruitment practices. However, these practices are not applied to all staff records, as some recruitment records do not include application forms, telephone reference checks and records to check significant gaps in employment history were not followed up and checks to past employers to ascertain reasons for leaving work with vulnerable adults or young people were not evidenced. These shortfalls may not have a direct impact on the day-to-day care provided to children and young people but they have potential to compromise young people's safety.

Leadership and management

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

The home's statement of purpose was reviewed in 2011 and provides clear information for interested parties. The children's guide provides information in a simple format appropriate for the children and young people who visit the home. An annual report is compiled by the managers that highlights the work undertaken and actions for the future in both units. The managers demonstrate an excellent understanding of the children and young people and families who benefit from the service and provide good role models for staff, with a desire to continue to improve

and provide an excellent service for young people with disabilities. The team have the skills and experience to ensure children and young people with differing needs receive safe and competent care. Staff have experience of addressing equality and diversity issues and are keen to ensure children and young people with disabilities benefit from their stay at the home.

The managers monitor matters the operation of the home each month, which contributes to the maintenance of good quality care. The external visitor appointed by the registered provider visits regularly and provides written reports. The home's management is proactive and effective in most areas however external managers have not acted promptly to rectify deficiencies in the recruitment process within the service. The home notifies the appropriate authorities about significant events that occur in children's and young people's lives relating to the protection of children. This ensures appropriate action is taken in response to any incident. This helps to promote children and young people's welfare and keep them safe.

The home's managers are respected by the staff team who benefit from support and supervision. Staff are experienced and trained to undertake their roles. Staff are competent in delivering care to the differing individual needs of the children and young people they look after. Staff demonstrate a good understanding of how to help children and young people achieve successful outcomes and celebrate achievements.

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.