

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Janet Hunnam
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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.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: a service that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

Good: a service that exceeds minimum requirements

Satisfactory: a service that only meets minimum requirements

Inadequate: a service that does not meet minimum requirements

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 eight young people with learning disabilities. It provides short break care and some longer term residential placements.

Overall effectiveness

The overall effectiveness is judged to be **outstanding**.

Young people receive extensive, individualised support from committed, enthusiastic staff. The staff team deliver an excellent quality of care which positively impacts on young people's progress and development.

A parent described it as 'a brilliant service' with one of the outstanding features being the way staff work collaboratively with families and schools and colleges to deliver highly personalised, effective care resulting in significant progress for the young people.

The needs and views of each young person is central to practice; staff are creative in seeking these views through varied means of communication to influence the delivery of an outstanding standard of care.

The quality of care is rigorously monitored by exceptional management to sustain high standards and achieve continuous improvement. Improving the outcomes for young people is at the heart of the service. Robust safeguarding practices keep the young people safe. Young people benefit from positive relationships with confident, well trained and dedicated staff. The staff team support young people to develop and achieve their life skills.

Those reports written following the monitoring of the home are not being sent to the regulator as required. However, the monitoring is thorough and systematic. The young people have access to a wide range of activities within the home but access to activities in the community is limited and young people are less able to make a positive contribution to their wider community.

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 there is a system to supply to HMCI a report in respect of any review conducted by him for the purposes of paragraph (1) (Regulation 34(2))	31/01/2012

Recommendations

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

- ensure children pursue individual interests and hobbies. This includes taking part in a range of activities, including leisure activities and trips. (NMS 7.2)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people thrive in a safe, nurturing and supportive environment that enables them to make significant progress. Highly individualised, child-focused care supports the young people in developing life skills. Young people have opportunities to make choices helping them to develop a positive self view.

Young people's health needs are met to a high level through close liaison with other professionals and considerable attention to their specific needs. Young people have realistic, achievable targets set so that they begin to take responsibility for their own health and develop an understanding of a healthy lifestyle.

Young people engage with and benefit from a wide range of activities within the home, for example individual music workshops, art and craft, cooking and also group games such as football and parachute games, encouraging positive interaction with their peers. They have some positive engagement with the wider community through shopping and meals in restaurants. They attend school or college; close liaison between the school or college and the home to meet young people's specific needs enables them to develop and make good progress.

Family contact is encouraged and welcomed and private, quiet space is available to facilitate these visits so that young people benefit from contact from those who are important to them. Planning for the transition of young people from the home to other services commences well in advance. This involves proactive liaison with other professionals so that young people are well prepared for the move.

Quality of care

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

Young people enjoy interacting with the staff that are calm, consistent and friendly. Staff are responsive to each young person giving them confidence to trust staff, develop positive relationships and react positively to the support given to them. Staff intervene gently to encourage and develop appropriate behaviour and young people are aware that staff are constantly concerned about their welfare.

Staff are creative in communicating with the young people to seek out their views and for them to make choices. They use a variety of communication methods to suit the needs of individual young people to ensure that each of their views, wishes and feelings are recognised and acted upon. Young people influence meals on the menu and alternative meals of their choice are available. Staff offer choice of activities in a picture format so young people can choose what they would like to do. Young people can also decide which staff they like to support them during their stay.

Managers seek out the views of young people on the service through surveys presented to them in an appropriate format. An independent advocate visits the home weekly, on a different day each week, to talk to the young people and put forward their views. Staff liaise very closely with parents and carers to find out the likes and dislikes of each young person in order to respect the young person's wishes and feelings during their stay at the home. The young person's guide, which is in an accessible format, has full details of the complaints procedure. Complaints are rare but management take these seriously and changes are implemented to ensure that lessons are learned.

Care plans are highly effective in identifying the specific, personal needs of the young people, the support they require and in setting targets and strategies to enable the young person to make progress. As a result, each young person receives personalised care that extensively promotes all aspects of their individual needs and identity. Integral to the care planning process is the contribution of parents and carers and school or college staff. This ensures that all significant parties are working together on targets and strategies to improve the outcomes of young people. A parent commented that the way the staff work collaboratively with the family and the young person's college in identifying targets and creatively implementing strategies had resulted in significant progress for the young person. This close engagement successfully promotes the young people's attendance and attainment at school or college. Young people are involved in this process to the level of their understanding and each young person has a key worker who reviews their care plan regularly. The professionalism of the staff and their commitment to constructive communication with all parties results in the young people making strides to achieve their potential. Young people are encouraged to take part in purposeful and enjoyable activities in the home.

Opportunities for young people to access facilities and leisure pursuits in the community are limited, Greater participation in community activities would extend their experiences and develop their skills.

Young people enjoy healthy meals with ample fresh fruit and vegetables. Staff take account of the young people's individual preferences when planning the menu. The

menu is available to the young people in picture format. Staff encourage young people to take physical exercise and the young people have access to a variety of outdoor play equipment. Specialist support is available from health professionals for young people and also to train staff to meet the individual needs of young people. The systems for the administration of medication are robust and closely monitored by management to ensure that medication is given to the young people safely and effectively. Young people live in a healthy environment which promotes their physical and emotional health needs.

The home provides an exceptionally clean and pleasant environment for the young people. The large rooms are maintained to a high standard, bathrooms are well equipped and separate areas for quiet, relaxation time or contact visits are available to meet the individual needs of the young people. There are play areas including a soft play room, a sensory room and a large outside safe and secure play area. Bedrooms are personalised for individual young people with some bright and stimulating and others providing a more calming environment.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

The home is extremely proactive in identifying the specific vulnerabilities of the young people and staff take appropriate action to protect them. Central to practice is safeguarding and the welfare of the young people. Staff are vigilant in monitoring the moods and feelings of the young people to ensure their safety. Staff are well trained in child protection and safeguarding practices. The staff's knowledge and awareness protect young people; any concerns are promptly referred and appropriate action taken. The staff team closely monitor young people resulting in no incidents of bullying or young people going missing from care. Thorough risk assessments for each young person continuously minimise the risk of harm to young people. Staff consistently apply personal behaviour management strategies to promote positive behaviour resulting in only occasional use of physical restraint and sanctions. The high level of awareness of safeguarding demonstrates a robust understanding of the need to promote the safety and well-being of young people. Consequently, young people feel safe and are safe at the home.

A rigorous recruitment process is in place contributing to the safety of young people. Prior to a person commencing their employment, management carry out all necessary checks to protect the young people from unsuitable adults working at the home.

The home adopts a thorough approach to health and safety matters, fire detection and prevention. Systematic checks and maintenance ensures the home is physically safe and that appropriate fire safety measures are in place. Risk assessments are effective and visitors are appropriately monitored. As a result, young people benefit from a safe environment which has a positive impact on their welfare.

Leadership and management

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

Young people benefit from this outstanding service which is managed extremely well. Excellent and effective leadership results in an ethos of continued improvement and better outcomes for young people. Well structured, systematic analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the home result in a challenging but realistic plan for development. Staff surveys contribute to this process of identifying areas for improvement.

Management consistently communicate their high expectations to staff about sustaining improvement. Two of the areas identified for improvement are to develop the range of communication resources to facilitate young people making choices and developing independence and to develop the consultation processes to gain the views of young people, parents, carers and stakeholders. To achieve these goals a new post has been created to specifically focus on improving these areas.

A comprehensive Statement of Purpose outlines the aims and objectives of the service; the home is operating in line with this statement. The young person's guide clearly sets out what the home provides and is in a format accessible to the young people. Also available is a DVD which visually communicates the facilities at the home, shows the sorts of activities available and staff interacting with young people. This is an excellent example of how the home is seeking to improve communication and provide materials in a format easily understood by the young people.

The Registered Manager makes excellent use of monitoring activities as part of the quality assurance system to maintain and improve the quality of care for young people. The report on the monitoring activities has not been sent to the regulator but the Registered Manager is in the process of forwarding it. This however, does not impact on young people. Included in this monitoring process are the results of comprehensive Regulation 33 monthly reports. The manager is keen to sustain high standards and continuously improve the service. All the monitoring processes contribute to this goal by identifying strengths and weaknesses.

Records are accurate, clear and transparent and are appropriately and securely stored. These records provide an excellent understanding of each young person's individual needs and progress they are making.

The home employs sufficient staff and adjusts the number of staff supporting young people according to the needs of each young person. Training is thorough and comprehensive. Appraisal and regular supervision identify individual training needs and development. Supervision also focuses on health and safety, key working and the needs of individual young people. Staff feel valued and are enthusiastic about developing their skills to meet the needs of young people and provide excellent care. New staff have an extensive induction programme to ensure they have the necessary skills to support young people to make progress. Staff report that they are well-supported by management who are approachable and caring.

Equality and diversity practice is **outstanding**.