

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	21/06/2013
Inspector	Jennifer Reed
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Date of last inspection	27/03/2013
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This service offers short breaks for up to eight children at any one time, for young people of either gender who have a severe learning and physical disability and/or complex health needs. This service is provided by a local authority and is available to families from across the county.

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 is judged as adequate overall, with some good features. Individual young people are mostly making good progress. Challenging behaviours are significantly reducing for young people during their stays and parents report improvements in their behaviour while at home. This supports young people to enjoy positive interactions with others and promotes their independence. A parent commented, 'my child looks forward to going to stay at the home and they are now able to successfully complete some daily tasks independently.'

Young people benefit from sound, consistent and personalised care, delivered by staff members who understand their individual needs, abilities and preferences. They are kept safe by the competent staff team who are vigilant in their supervision and care of young people. Young people have fun and enjoy taking part in a range of stimulating activities. A social worker said, 'this is a flexible and supportive service for young people.'

A number of requirements and recommendations are raised. These are made with regard to improving the effective management and monitoring of the home's systems, records, risk assessments and young people's plans.

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
23 (2001)	ensure that all parts of the home to which children have access are so far as reasonably practicable free from hazards to their health and safety; in particular, to cease using the Lincat water boiler located in the Lodge kitchen	21/06/2013
17A (2001)	ensure that the written record of the use of any measure of control, restraint or discipline made in a volume kept for the purpose includes sufficient details of the child's behaviour leading to the use of the measure (Regulation 17 (3) (b))	31/07/2013
17A (2001)	ensure within 24 hours of the use of any measure of control, restraint or discipline, a written record includes the duration of the measure of restraint (Regulation 17 (4) (a))	31/07/2013
27 (2001)	ensure that all persons employed receive appropriate supervision. (Regulation 27 (4)(a))	31/07/2013

Recommendations

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

- ensure that the result of all statutory reviews and reviews of placement plans are recorded on the child's file, and the individuals responsible for pursuing actions at the home arising from reviews are clearly identified (NMS 25.8)
- ensure that the home meets children's behavioural needs, as set out in their placement plans; in particular, by providing clear behaviour management strategies for each child (NMS 3.7)
- promote the welfare of children living in the home by undertaking risk assessments for off-site activities and by providing a personal evacuation plan for each child (NMS 4.2)
- ensure that risk assessments of the whole children's home environment, to identify any potential sources of harm to children, are robust and regularly reviewed (NMS 10.8)
- update the children's guide to ensure it includes current contact details (NMS 13.5)
- consider the suitability of new staff undertaking the Children's Workforce Development Council's induction standards, commencing within 7 working days of starting their employment and being completed within 6 months (NMS 18.3)

- ensure written supervision records include the time and length of each supervision held for each member of staff (NMS 19.5)
- ensure the system in place to monitor the quality and adequacy of record keeping is effective to ensure action is taken when needed (NMS 22.1)
- ensure information about the child is recorded clearly and in a way which will be helpful to the child when they access their files now or in the future. (NMS 22.5)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people benefit from the home's collaborative approach to delivering their care which takes into account the support they receive while at home and at school. This consistent, focused delivery of care and support helps young people to make sense of their stay and to feel more secure. This holistic approach supports young people to achieve good outcomes while at the home and their achievements positively impact on other areas of their lives.

Young people are improving the quality of their interactions with others. Staff support young people in using their individual communication systems and they are supported to share information and make their wishes and feelings known. Young people have participated in interviewing for a suitable person to be the advocate for the home. This involvement in decision-making within the home promotes young people's self-esteem and confidence.

Young people receive good support and guidance on how to manage their personal care. One parent said, 'my child now shows me his toothbrush symbol and then we can support him to clean his teeth.' Wherever possible, young people make choices about aspects of their care and this promotes their dignity and reduces their anxieties and frustration.

Young people are helped to increase their independence skills, for example, by encouraging their participation in toileting programmes and helping with household tasks. One parent said, 'there has been a big improvement at meal times. My child is now able to get their yoghurt from the fridge and can sit safely at the table with others to eat their meals.'

The range of stimulating activities provided to young people, contribute to broadening their experiences and enjoyment. These opportunities support young people to have fun, and to spend time with other young people. Many activities increase young people's inclusion in the community.

Quality of care

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

Parents are very pleased with the quality of the support provided to their children

while staying at the home and knowing that their children are happy when they are there. The home works cooperatively with parents and other agencies to ensure that young people's needs are fully met while the young person is away from their parents. Parents and social workers highlight how this short breaks service promotes young people's development which enhances and supports family life. Their progress contributes to maintaining young people's relationships with their families and being cared for by them.

The home understands the role of parents in determining the shape of any short stay. Staff consult regularly with parents and ensure that parents are kept well informed of their child's welfare. The flexibility of the home in responding to individual needs and the collaborative arrangements made with parents is much appreciated by them and benefits young people. One parent said, 'the staff are very helpful at all times. I talk regularly with my child's key worker and they send me photos of them on activities and trips out.'

The service provides young people with a good range of opportunities to take part in stimulating activities both within and outside of the home. Young people particularly enjoy the home's outside play areas, the sensory rooms and organised trips into the community. One young person said, 'I am going to a carnival and to a circus this week-end.'

The home offers flexible and tailor-made care to provide individualised care for each young person. Social workers report that the 'wrap around care' provided by the home for young people is very good.' Strong working relationships with schools supports young people's high level of attendance. However, the home does not routinely ensure that the minutes of all review meetings are recorded on young people's files to ensure that current planning is implemented.

A consistent staff team works in each unit to make sure young people are looked after by staff that they recognise and who know them well. Staff demonstrate an excellent understanding of each young person's needs, preferences and preferred communications methods. Staff promptly act upon any signs which indicate young people need some form of support. As a result, young people's welfare is well promoted and they feel secure during their stay. One young person said, 'I like coming here; I like the adults and I like cottage pie!'

Clear health plans and health and medication strategies promote young people's good health. Staff complete training in first aid and the administration of medication which ensures young people receive the daily health support they require to maintain their well-being. Young people enjoy eating the nutritional and well cooked meals that meet their particular dietary requirements.

The home provides a good standard of accommodation and sufficient resources that help make young people feel comfortable during their stays. The current redecoration and refurbishment programme is contributing to providing a brighter and more child-focused environment. The home offers a range of facilities which provide young people with the environmental adaptations and aids that they require on

a daily basis.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Staff are vigilant in keeping young people safe from possible harm and demonstrate a good understanding of safeguarding issues. Young people do not go missing from this home. Young people's well-being is the priority concern of the staff at all times. Regular staff meetings discuss how best to care for young people and this helps keep them safe. Staff recognise young people's individual triggers and vulnerabilities and take effective and innovative action to avoid any identified potential problem. Their proactive and sensitive support helps protect young people.

The local authority's behaviour management strategy is implemented and contributed to by the home. The home works collaboratively with a behaviour analyst, employing similar techniques, resources and strategies to those used in schools. This helps to ensure that young people benefit from a consistent approach to their welfare.

Staff also regularly consult with parents to promote positive outcomes for young people. Staff praise young people for their achievements and this positive reinforcement encourages young people to try new things. This uniform approach to the provision of care and support contributes to reducing young people's frustrations. In turn, this contributes to reducing the frequency of challenging behaviour and the frequency of imposing disciplinary measures. However, clear, written behaviour management strategies and plans are not in place to protect all young people.

A very small minority of young people require restraint techniques to be employed to keep them or others safe from harm. However, not all incidents of restraints and sanctions given are accurately and clearly recorded. This means that monitoring processes cannot be effective and this potentially reduces the safeguarding of young people's welfare.

The home undertakes risk assessment processes to safeguard young people. However, risk assessments for day trips out are not carried out. Furthermore, not all risk assessments for the premises and young people are robustly undertaken. They are not all regularly reviewed or updated on at least an annual basis. The water boiler located in one kitchen is unsuitable; it provides a high and unnecessary risk or possible harm to young people. The Registered Manager agreed at inspection that this would no longer be used, to ensure that young people were not being placed at a high risk of harm.

Regular fire, utilities and services safety checks are carried out, to ensure young people and staff stay and work in a safe environment. The home has drawn up a clearly written emergency evacuation plan for the home. However, personal evacuation plans for each young person are not in place to show how best to support individuals in an emergency. Specialist equipment is available in the home to aid the

effective evacuation of the building for young people with disabilities.

Recruitment and selection processes are robust. The necessary vetting processes are completed to check that new employees are suitable to work with young people.

Leadership and management

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

No requirements or recommendations for improvement were made at the previous inspection. The Registered Manager demonstrates a good awareness of the strengths and areas for improvement within the service. This knowledge is reflected within the home's development plan.

Social workers report that the management of the home has improved. The functioning of the home is now reported to be 'more collaborative and open' when working with other professionals. The home is effectively implementing the local authority's behaviour strategy to successfully bring about improved outcomes for individual young people.

The home's children's guide is provided in various formats to meet young people's differing needs and use their diverse communication methods. However, it has not been updated to include current contact details.

The manager regularly monitors and reviews the quality of care and practice to identify improvements in outcomes for young people. However, the evaluation of practice is weak and it does not always lead to action being taken to bring about improvement. For example, effective and prompt action has not been taken to improve the already known shortfalls in the recording of control measures. The lack of key information within these records means that the appropriateness of such measures has not been effectively monitored to ensure young people's welfare is safeguarded.

Regular independent monitoring processes in recent months have highlighted various shortfalls in the quality of recording. These have not been satisfactorily addressed by the home to bring about improvement. For example: the use of restraint; the frequency of supervision; the keeping of information within young people's files; and gaining sufficient looked after children information to inform the delivery of young people's care.

The staff team are experienced and well qualified. The staffing establishment is well organised to provide young people with adequate levels of consistent care. Staff demonstrate commitment and competence in their work supporting and caring for young people accommodated on a short stay basis within the home. Staff benefit from good access to a range of relevant training opportunities and this good quality training supports them to look after young people well. New staff undertake the local authority's induction programme and staff do not complete the Children's Workforce Development Council's induction standards.

Not all staff receive regular supervision. The infrequent arrangements for the supervision of a probationary member of staff are unsatisfactory.

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.