

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Bill Drumm
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This local authority children's home provides short-break care and accommodation for seven children with learning and physical disabilities, from nine years and up to 17 years of age.

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**.

The home provides a highly personalised short break service to young people with disabilities. Each young person has a detailed care plan which incorporates individualised day and night-time routines. Staff are attentive to young people's changing needs. Care plans are reviewed frequently in order to keep up-to-date with those changing needs. This helps to keep young people safe.

Staff are committed to ensuring that young people views are central to how the home is run. It is very much a 'needs led' service and the home is well equipped to meet the needs of all the young people who stay there. All young people have made progress. For some individuals, their progress has been excellent.

The quality of care in the home is good. Keyworkers have a thorough knowledge of the young people in their care and have developed positive relationships with their families, education providers and health care staff. This allows the building of trust which enables consistent care for the young people.

The home's manager and staff are all committed and motivated to achieving excellent outcomes for young people. Monitoring processes are thorough and shows the commitment to, and desire for, continual improvement.

Areas identified for improvement relate to the home's admissions and discharge register, individual risk assessments for young people and the home's Statement of Purpose. These shortfalls have not directly impacted on young people's safety and welfare.

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
29 (2001)	maintain in the children's home the records specified in Schedule 4, with particular reference to those relating to young people. (Regulation 29 (1) Schedule 4 (1))	30/09/2013

Recommendations

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

- review the home's Statement of Purpose, with particular reference to ensuring that information relating to the action staff should take if a child goes missing is fully recorded (NMS 13.3)
- implement a proportionate approach to risk assessment. (NMS 4.5)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people have made good progress in developing a positive self-view and development of their emotional resilience since attending the service. One young person's social worker said, 'This is a really good place for young people to come. They enjoy so many different things and the staff are wonderful. It's great to see them enjoying themselves'. Young people form appropriate relationships with the staff and each other according to their abilities. Friendships are promoted through careful, considerate planning of short-break care. Where possible, young people are 'matched' to make the very best groupings for overnight stays. This means that young people enjoy the company of others and over time they can become more confident and outgoing.

The home has very positive links with parents and health care professionals. One parent said: 'This is a lovely place. I am relaxed and happy to leave my child here-something we have never had before.' The health care needs of individual young people are known and understood. This means that young people's health needs are met well. The staff team are trained in caring for young people with complex needs.

Staff can pick up on each individual's non-verbal communications if they are not feeling well or are unhappy about something. Young people develop in all aspects of their lives. Young people's physical health is supported by the staff team's commitment and determination in conjunction with external health agencies.

Opportunities for young people to experience new things are abundant. Where they are able, young people are encouraged and supported to develop independence skills and to learn activities for daily living. A parent of one young person said, 'My child takes part in cooking, general housework and washing-up - he also loves to vacuum the floor. This gives him good life skills should he ever live on his own in the future.' Examples of activities enjoyed by young people include attending an open day at the local fire station, visits to the park, baking, and trips to the cinema and museums. The outcome is that young people make positive progress in developing their social skills and confidence in accessing a range of activities both in-house and off-site.

All young people attend education. Transport arrangements within the home ensure that young people arrive safely and on time. There are very good and effective communication links between school and the home, which includes written communication books, telephone updates and visits by staff. Staff within the home and school are able to share ideas and strategies about how best to help young people. This helps them to continue making progress and to achieve their maximum potential.

Quality of care

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

All aspects of young people's health are considered when they are first referred to the home for a short break. Medication is rigorously checked on admission, during administration, and at discharge to ensure accuracy. Staff work proactively and in the spirit of partnership with parents and other agencies to meet young people medical and psychological needs; this ensures young people's physical, emotional and psychological health needs are met.

There is a diverse staff team who all bring individual characteristics and ideas to their role which in turn benefits the young people. Staff have very high aspirations for the young people in their care. They offer support, help and guidance to individuals so that they might develop the skills necessary in order to manage their own behaviour and develop good relationships with adults and peers. Positive relationships exist between staff, young people and parents which are built on trust and sound working practices. These positive relationships enable staff to implement imaginative strategies in order to ensure the young people's short-break experience is enjoyable. Consequently, young people increase their social skills, become more relaxed and develop new skills.

The young people's needs are central in staff practice. Regular discussions take place around proactive behaviour management strategies for individuals. The team work very well together using team meetings, handovers, and supervision sessions, to

ensure they deliver consistent care. This forms the basis for the highly individualised care plans which are completed by staff and reviewed and updated regularly. The young person's background, behaviour, health issues, routines, cultural and religious needs and characteristics are all included in the care plans. These also include the strategies which work best for individuals which enable a holistic and consistent approach to meeting their individual needs.

Young people are able to make positive choices in some aspects of their care including menu planning and activities. One young person said, 'I like the food and I love the activities. I wish we had more party nights, karaoke and discos.' Each young person is treated as an individual, for example, staff use a range of communication systems to communicate with young people. Staff are very skilled at interpreting non-verbal signals and sounds to ensure that a young person is happy and comfortable. As a result, young people feel listened to.

The home is well maintained and spacious, and there is a well-equipped garden which is utilised when the weather permits. The location enables easy access for parents and young people and allows young people the opportunity to visit the local shops and parks.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

There are clear risk assessments in place for each young person and the activities they become involved with. This helps to keep them safe and encourages safe working practices. Risk assessments are reviewed frequently to ensure they contain up-to-date information in order to help keep young people safe. However, some minor discrepancies were found in the level of risk for a particular activity recorded on the front of the risk assessment to that recorded within the document. As a result, staff may not be fully aware of the real level of risk associated with the young person or the activity they wish to pursue. As a result, young people may not be kept fully safe.

All relevant health and safety checks are up-to-date and certificates are in place which helps to ensure the safety and well-being of the young people, visitors to the home and staff. There are high levels of support and supervision within the home due to young people's challenging behaviour and vulnerability. All outings and external activities are also closely supervised and as a result, young people do not go missing from the home. Collectively, the safeguarding practices employed by the staff at the home ensure that all young people have a strong sense of safety and can express themselves freely without fear of harm.

Positive behaviour is promoted and encouraged using extremely individualised strategies and each young person has their own behaviour management plan in place. This is an integral part of the care plan and is reviewed and updated regularly as young people begin to respond to alternative strategies. The hard work and perseverance of the staff team means that some young people have made significant

progress in areas such as communication and managing their own behaviour.

Staff provide clear, consistent boundaries, and continually reinforce these by praising desired behaviour. Consequently, young people generally behave well, and understand the expectations. Sanctions are extremely rare occurrences, and physical restraint is usually used as a caring hold to guide a young person, and prevent them harming themselves or others.

The staff team receive regular training in child protection procedures and safeguarding vulnerable young people. They are very much aware of the signs and symptoms to be aware of in relation to abuse and how to report any concerns they may have. This means that young people are safeguarded by staffs' well-informed safe working practices.

The home's complaints procedures are made available to parents and young people to ensure they feel confident they could make a complaint if necessary. Not every young person can verbalise a worry or complaint. However, staff are extremely capable of picking up on non-verbal signals from young people which may be that of upset or dissatisfaction. This means that staff are able to act appropriately in order to meet that young person's needs.

There is a robust recruitment and selection process in place. This ensures young people are kept safe from harm by being cared for by appropriately qualified and experienced staff that are suitable to work with young people. The management of the home exhibits a sound understanding of safer recruitment practices which in turn helps to keep young people safe.

Leadership and management

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

The home is successfully managed by a skilled, qualified and child-focused manager who is committed to the continual improvement to both the home and the care provided to vulnerable young people. Leading by example ensures the staff team as a whole apply these attributes to their practice. This means that the home runs efficiently and provides high quality care for young people. A parent of one young person said, 'I have nothing negative to say about the home, I think the staff there are great. My son has a wonderful relationship with his keyworker and I feel happy and secure sending him there. Excellent service and staff all round.' Robust monitoring practices notify the manager of the strengths and weaknesses of the home, which in turn, informs the home's development plan.

The home has an admissions and discharge register to record who has been admitted to the home and how long they used the service. However, the precise addresses of where young people have lived prior to admission and on leaving the home are not recorded. This does not provide the record required and does not contribute to a sufficient understanding of the young person's life.

Staff receive good training opportunities, encompassing refresher training, professional development and specific skills-based courses to meet the particular needs of the young people. All staff are suitably qualified. Supervision is regular and of good quality and team meetings further support staff development in their content and frequency. As a result, young people are cared for by suitably skilled, qualified and supported staff.

There is a clear Statement of Purpose, which is regularly reviewed to reflect any changes made to the service. It provides an accurate reflection of the home. Placing social workers are clear about the aims and objectives of the home and what services and facilities it provides. However, the document is not explicit with regards to what actions staff will take if a young person goes missing from the home. This means that parents or placing social workers may not be fully aware of what actions staff will take in locating a young person and how they can be kept safe.

There are some underlying staff anxieties within the home as a result of a local authority review of the service. This has caused some uncertainty among the staff team. However, the home's manager has been able to ensure sufficient staffing and supervision for the young people at all times and this has not impacted on the young people's welfare.

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.