

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 up to 17 years old.

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**.

Young people who live at the home enjoy doing so. They are well cared for and happy and participate in a wide range of activities. The manager and members of staff are both enthusiastic and lively and provide a happy, relaxed environment in which young people can progress and flourish. Young people placed at the home have a detailed and comprehensive assessment of their needs undertaken, prior to being placed there. Regular reviews of those needs are carried out and the service provided to young people is adapted in light of those changing needs. Each young person has a key worker. Key workers monitor young people's progress and liaise closely with professionals and parents about the help and support given to them. Staff and young people enjoy a warm, friendly relationship. Help given to young people is carried out in a discreet, sensitive manner to ensure the dignity of the young person remains paramount. Young people, parents and professionals have positive views about the home. The behaviour of young people is well managed and the use of sanctions or restraint is seldom, if ever, used. All young people are fully engaged in education.

Although restraint is seldom used, the written records of any restraints that have been carried out are unclear. One particular record looked at had been completed by more than one staff member. The children's guide to the home is clear and informative. Further review of the children's guide is however necessary to ensure it fully complies with national minimum standards and guidance. The independent visitor to the home does not always speak, in private, with staff working there. This does not allow staff the opportunity to express any concerns they may have confidentially. Not all staff training is up to date. For instance, training in first aid has

not been reviewed for some time. The home's manager is unable to confirm that a qualified first aider is on duty at all times within the home. However, a programme of updating training is underway.

The home has taken positive steps to address a previous requirement in relation to the independent visits to the home. The frequency at which these visits take place has improved, although further improvements are necessary for them to fully comply with regulations.

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
17B (2001)	ensure that within 24 hours of the use of any measure of control, restraint or discipline in a children's home, a written record is made in a volume kept for the purpose. (Regulation 17B (3))	31/08/2012

Recommendations

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

- review the home's Children's Guide to include the correct contact details of the current regulatory authority as well as those of the Children's Rights Director (NMS 13.5)
- ensure that all staff training is kept up to date and that staff are equipped with the skills required to meet the needs of the children (NMS 18.1)
- ensure that the independent visitor to the home speaks with staff in order to form an opinion of the standard of care provided. (NMS 21.7)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Each young person living at the home has an individualised care plan which shows what their specific care needs are and how they will be met. This not only helps young people to remain safe and well, but also to learn new things and to experience new activities. Within the limits of their abilities, young people are fully involved in

making decisions about their lives and the things they do. This helps them to grow in confidence and improve their self-esteem. Each young person has a key-worker. Meetings between key-workers and young people take place at frequent intervals. The key-working system is effective in ensuring essential information is shared between all relevant professionals and parents. This helps young people to stay safe, achieve their agreed goals and to develop new ones. One such example of this is the encouragement given to one young person to speak more loudly and not to whisper. Members of staff are aware of each young person's strengths and they provide a very supportive and enthusiastic environment in which young people can develop their skills and confidence. Young people are encouraged to become involved in the local community and further afield. An example of this was a trip to a local coffee morning and areas of interest in the local area.

The primary health care needs of young people remains the responsibility of their parents. However, those who fall ill or suffer accidents at the home are quickly attended to by staff and, where appropriate, medical help is summoned. Within the limits of their abilities, young people are encouraged to enjoy regular exercise particularly in the soft play area and gardens at the home. Young people are encouraged to understand the importance of staying healthy and in taking regular exercise.

Young people receive a consistent level of help and support to learn new things and to develop their independence. Within the limits of their ability, young people are encouraged to take part in meal preparation and to prepare snacks. Young people are supported to develop a positive self-image and to be aware of their own personal hygiene needs. Members of staff offer practical help and assistance in enabling young people to develop these skills in a sensitive manner. This helps to prepare young people for their transition into adulthood.

The education and school attendance of young people living at the home remains the primary responsibility of their parents. However, staff actively encourage and promote their attendance. In addition, staff are in regular contact with all education providers. This helps to ensure that changes in need and circumstances are quickly identified and services adapted to continue meeting those needs. Regular school attendance gives young people the opportunity to learn new things and to achieve their full potential.

Quality of care

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

The home provides a warm and supportive environment in which young people can develop both physically and emotionally. Care plans, and the assessment of the individual needs of young people have been carried out prior to young people moving into the home. In addition, the home has developed clear, easy to understand individual care plans for each young person. The care plans are both well

organised and thorough. Members of staff understand the needs of young people and work hard to ensure they are met.

Regular monitoring and review of the care provided to young people takes place. This enables staff to evaluate the care they provide. Written records of all reviews undertaken are available within the home. The changing needs of young people are met in a prompt and timely fashion.

Young people's files are detailed and well ordered. Written information retained within the home provides an extensive record of each young person's stay there as well as the help and support they receive. Within the limits of their abilities, young people are involved in the running of the home with regular meetings taking place between staff and young people. Within the home there is a culture of promoting each young person's rights and in ensuring they are able to participate in a wide range of activities. This helps young people to develop their confidence and self-esteem.

The home has a clear, detailed admissions process for young people. Members of staff are committed to ensuring each young person enjoys a positive experience while living at the home and is able to develop both physically and emotionally. Young people are actively encouraged and enabled to visit the home prior to admission in order to meet staff members and to familiarise themselves with the surroundings. This process helps to overcome any anxieties the young person may have and to ensure the home can meet their needs.

Young people enjoy living in a residential area. During their stay, each young person has their own bedroom and they are encouraged to make them as comfortable and personal as possible. There is a television and computer gaming equipment in the lounge where young people can relax and socialise. The home also has a dining area where members of staff and young people can enjoy a meal together. In addition the home also has a sensory room and soft play area. Externally the home has a large garden with a range of play equipment. In all, the home provides a comfortable and pleasant environment for young people to enjoy.

Young people are encouraged to enjoy a healthy lifestyle. Individual dietary needs are catered for and members of staff have undergone training in safe food hygiene. Each young person has written consent forms in place in order for members of staff to administer medication or first aid where this is necessary. The welfare of young people is, therefore, safeguarded.

Relationships between members of staff and young people are very warm and friendly. Members of staff actively strive to provide an environment in which young people can be happy and flourish. Young people and members of staff were observed to have a warm, friendly relationship. No complaints have been made by young people, they make good progress and appear happy living at the home. Several compliments have been received from satisfied parents about the service provided to their children.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

There are clear systems in place within the home to safeguard young people. There have been no occasions since the last inspection when a young person has been missing. In addition, there are no recorded incidents of bullying having occurred within the home. The manager and all members of staff are trained in safeguarding. Regular refresher training takes place to keep their skills and knowledge up to date. This helps to ensure they are both confident and competent in dealing with any safeguarding issues should they arise.

Members of staff actively promote a culture of positive behaviour within the home. Young people are, within the limits of their abilities, supported to take responsibility for their actions. Punitive measures such as sanctions and restraint are seldom, if ever, used. Members of staff prefer to use their skills and competencies to divert young peoples' attention away from undertaking any negative behaviour. However, the restraint of one young person has been necessary since the last inspection. The written record of this restraint has been completed by two separate staff members. It is unclear if secondary information has been added to the restraint record at the time of the incident or sometime afterwards.

The home's manager carries out regular checks of the home's fire systems, smoke detectors and emergency lighting. Young people take part in fire drills and the time at which fire drills take place are fully recorded. Young people live in a safe environment because the home has a thorough and systematic approach to risk management. Risk assessments are clear, focused and regularly reviewed. Regular checks of gas installations and electrical equipment also take place.

Young people benefit from a very stable staff team and there have been no new appointments since the last inspection. The home operates a thorough, detailed and robust recruitment policy. This helps to ensure young people are looked after by suitable people and are protected from potential abuse. Visitors to the home are asked to clearly identify themselves on arrival and to sign the visitors book.

Leadership and management

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

The home's manager is an experienced and well respected professional who provides effective and competent leadership. Staff members are motivated and actively encouraged to create new opportunities for the young people living at the home. The home meets the aims and objectives set out in its Statement of Purpose and provides clear information about the skills, qualifications and experience of the staff team. The children's guide to the home is clearly written and is provided to each young person when they are being considered for a placement at the home.

However, the children's guide does not contain the correct telephone number for the current regulatory body, nor does it include information about how young people can contact the Children's Rights Director. Young people will not know who they can contact if they are unhappy about anything.

The home's manager provides daily support to the staff team and regular formal supervision. This helps staff members to know what is expected of them and to feel supported in their work. Young people receive consistent care from a well-supported staff team. Members of staff understand each young person's individual strengths and needs. Working practices are consistent in enabling young people to develop both physically and emotionally, in increasing their self-esteem and in helping them to achieve their maximum potential. Young people are supported to learn new skills and, where able, to participate in how the home is run.

The organisation demonstrates a commitment to training all staff. However, not all training is kept up to date. For instance, a number of staff members have not had refresher training in first aid for several years. This does not help to ensure they retain the skills and competencies they need to care for young people with disabilities.

Young people live in a home that is effectively managed. The home's manager provides effective management and has systems in place to ensure that the quality of care is regularly monitored. Problem areas which may be identified are quickly highlighted and swift action is taken. The manager has written a detailed development plan for the home. The manager and staff know what the strengths and weaknesses of the home are and what improvements they wish to make.

Monitoring visits from someone independent of the home take place every month. The person undertaking these visits talks, where possible, with young people and their parents or relatives. However, the visiting officer does not always speak privately with staff. These visits do not help to ensure that the home is run properly and that young people are well cared for. In addition, the knowledge and understanding of staff about what strategies may work to help young people develop their independence and mature is not borne in mind.

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.