

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Steve Pearson
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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

The children's home provides short-break care and accommodation for up to six young people. The home is run by a local authority and is registered to care for young people with learning disabilities.

Overall effectiveness

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

The children's home is run well and outcomes for young people are excellent. The team of staff are skilled, knowledgeable and experienced. They are supported well and receive training in a wide range of subjects. Young people and their parents have a significant say in how the home is run. There are a superb range of leisure facilities available to young people and the planning of accommodation provides for good consistency and continuity for young people.

There are shortfalls in the home's quality monitoring procedures because the views of parents and other stakeholders are not being incorporated into the assessments. The recruitment procedures are also somewhat weak because important information is not being sought. Although the use of restraint is rare, the recording of how a restraint was conducted is not adequately detailed and this leads to a loss of accountability.

Overall, however, the manager and staff are providing high quality care to the young people and high levels of support for parents and carers.

Areas for improvementStatutory 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 restraint, a written record is made in a volume kept for the purpose which shall include a description of the measure used. In particular, the description must not be based solely on technical jargon (Regulation 17B)	05/12/2011
26 (2001)	ensure that all necessary recruitment checks are conducted. In particular this means obtaining a full employment history including dates that quote the month and year; and for job	03/11/2011

	applicants who have previously worked with children or vulnerable adults, so far as reasonably practicable, verification with that employer as to why the employment or position ended (Schedule 2, Regulation 26)	
34 (2001)	ensure that, as appears necessary, the person conducting the external visits interviews, with their consent and in private, the children's parents and relatives in order to form an opinion of the standard of care provided in the home (Regulation 33(4)(a))	01/01/2012
34 (2001)	ensure that the system for monitoring the matters set out in Schedule 6 provides for consultation with the parents of children accommodated in the home and the placing authority. (Regulation 34 (3))	01/01/2012

Recommendations

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

- ensure that each young person has on their file prior written permission, from a person with parental responsibility, allowing the staff to administer first aid to their child (Volume 5, statutory guidance, para 2.54)
- ensure the children's guide provides information for young people about how they may contact the Children's Rights Director (NMS 13.5)
- ensure that, where a child requires it, the children's guide is available when appropriate through suitable alternative methods of communication such as pictures (NMS 13.6)
- ensure that the external monthly visitor assesses the records of missing person's reports and evaluates how the home is supporting children to enjoy and achieve and whether there is an effective approach to behaviour management (Volume 5, statutory guidance, para 3.12)
- in relation to Regulation 34, send a copy of the monitoring report to Ofsted within 28 days of its completion (Volume 5, statutory guidance, para 3.14)
- take action to address any issues of concern that they identify or which is raised with them through the visits conducted under Regulation 33. In particular this concerns the problem of fallen leaves preventing children from using the outdoor play equipment. (NMS 21.9)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people are happy, relaxed and stimulated. One young person said 'it's great

here, I love it'. The staff listen to the young people and they take their views seriously. This helps the young people to gain self-esteem and feel valued. Their identity and potential develops extremely positively because the staff listen to them and their parents and this helps to ensure their individual needs are met.

Primary responsibility for health remains with parents. However young people are fully supported in their ongoing health because the staff provide a healthy diet, they are all qualified to provide first aid if necessary, the administration of medication is effective and the young people are able to take part in a very wide range of activities which provide physical exercise. Written consent from those with parental responsibility enabling the staff to provide first aid to young people if necessary is not currently in place.

The staff link with young people's schools to provide continuity of progress. For example, the staff help to ensure young people complete their school work. There are also two computers for young people to access, a range of drawing and colouring materials and a range of books.

Young people are fully supported to make the transition from support relevant to children to support for adults at age 18. One of the staff has special responsibility for overseeing these transitional arrangements and clear information is available for parents on these matters. Young people who are aged 17 receive introductory visits at adult services to help them become accustomed to the forthcoming changes.

Quality of care

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

Young people gain confidence and esteem through having a significant say in their own care plans and in how the home is run. For example, one young person said 'the staff talk to us about what we want and then they try to do it for us'. Young people can also write their wishes and opinions in a feedback book which the Registered Manager responds quickly to. The Registered Manager and staff seek the views of parents on a regular basis and these also affect how the home operates.

The staff are very effective in promoting positive behaviour. They receive regular training in how to promote positive behaviour including training in how to safely restrain any young person if necessary. The staff rarely use sanctions for negative behaviour although any sanctions that are used are fair. They regularly give young people rewards and these are very effective in promoting good behaviour.

The children's home provides young people with a superb range of leisure activities. These include on-site facilities such as a cinema, a music mixing desk, a light stimulation facility, a ball pit, an adventure play ground and bicycles. There is also a beauty parlour, two computers and computer games and screen coordination games and activities. Young people also regularly go on day-trips and holidays involving overnight stays. Young people were highly excited about the recent trips they had made to a theme park in France and to London. They also attend a youth club twice

a week. This provides a sense of fun and helps young people to develop friendships with others.

The premises of the children's home are well-maintained, clean and homely. Young people have suitable bedroom facilities. For example, one young person said 'I like my bedroom, it has everything I need'.

Very effective planning arrangements are in place to ensure that the young people who stay at the home get on together. For example, the same young people tend to stay the same nights and the Registered Manager ensures that the young people are of a similar age. This provides a strong sense of continuity and consistency which is especially important for some young people.

The staff are fully aware of the needs of young people because of clear and comprehensive residential placement plans. These are easy to understand and are specific about the individualised needs of each young person. Important information such as their likes and dislikes, how they communicate and their behavioural needs are clearly recorded. The plans are reviewed regularly and are kept up to date. They are therefore a useful working document which enable the staff to be clear about young people's needs and how to meet them.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

The staff record the use of sanctions and restraints appropriately. However, there is not full accountability because the recording of how a restraint was conducted relies on professional jargon. This terminology is not necessarily understood by those outside of the staff team.

The staff receive a wide range of training in subjects related to safeguarding and promoting welfare. They fully understand how to respond to allegations, suspicions or evidence of harm. Of the three young people who completed a survey, two said that they always felt safe at the children's home and one said they sometimes feel safe. Clear risk assessments are in place in relation to any foreseeable hazards that may affect young people. An occupational therapist has also provided specialist advice regarding risk assessments for young people who need support for lifting and moving.

The premises are maintained in a safe condition. Professional technicians regularly service the electrical equipment, gas appliances and equipment for preventing, detecting and extinguishing fires. The staff also receive regular training in promotion of health and safety.

Most of the necessary recruitment checks take place before any person may work at the home. However, it is difficult to establish whether job applicants have a full employment history. Although they are asked to give the start and finish dates of previous employment on their application form, dates have been accepted that

describe only the year rather than the month and year. Additionally, there are not full checks on why applicants may have left previous employment with children or vulnerable adults because they are not asked to give this information on their application form.

Leadership and management

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

Ofsted made three recommendations at the previous inspection and the registered persons have responded appropriately to all of them. As a result, there is now better accountability for the use of medication because the staff record the administration of controlled drugs in a bound book. The arrangements for fire safety have also improved because the staff have conducted a fire drill at night. The ancillary staff are supported better now because they receive regular formal supervision.

The children's home has a clear and comprehensive Statement of Purpose. This contains useful information about how the home operates and about the experience and training of the team of staff. Young people also receive a children's guide when they come to stay. However, this is not fully accessible to young people as it is not written in a pictorial format which some would find easier to understand. The guide also does not contain all the necessary information for young people, such as information about the Children's Rights Director.

An established management structure is in place and the senior team provide clear and consistent leadership. The Registered Manager is highly qualified and very experienced. The deputy is also well-qualified and a registered nurse. The management team assess the progress of the service on a regular basis and they create an annual business plan to cover any significant proposed developments.

The staffing levels are appropriate and young people receive one-to-one staffing ratios when necessary. Young people receive care that is provided by a consistent team of staff. The staff receive training in a wide variety of subjects and all of the team are qualified in caring for children. A robust induction procedure is in place for new members of staff and this follows the standards set by the Children's Workforce Development Council.

The staff also receive good support from regular one-to-one supervision from their line manager. They also receive annual appraisals of their performance and career development aspirations.

The arrangements in place to monitor the quality of care have some weaknesses. The external visitor who calls once a month does not directly seek the views of parents or relatives. They also do not evaluate how well the staff enable young people to enjoy and achieve, how they manage behaviour and whether there have been any incidents of young people going missing. Some recommendations made in these reports are not being addressed quickly and this is having an impact on the quality of care. Specifically, this relates to leaves that fall on the playground

preventing the young people from using the slide, swings and other play equipment.

The Registered Manager also assesses the quality of care on a monthly basis. However, the reports do not indicate evidence of consultation with young people's parents or social workers. There is therefore a concern that some shortfalls may not be identified and addressed. These reports have not been sent to Ofsted and as a result the regulator is less able to keep up to date about the operation of the home.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.