

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Steve Pearson
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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.

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 Registered Manager and staff provide a very good quality of care to children. Parents speak highly of the service and feel confident and secure about the care provided.

Children make measurable progress particularly in terms of becoming more settled and outgoing. Their sleep also improves as a result of the sleep programme.

The Registered Manager provides effective and proactive management and leadership and aims to ensure the quality of care continually improves. The staff are experienced and skilled and they provide consistent care which children respond to positively. The home provides a welcoming and child-focused atmosphere and children have fun while they stay there.

There is a minor shortfall in the recording of restraints and sanctions although such measures are used very rarely. The home is not displaying an up-to-date certificate of registration which means people are not being adequately informed about its current registration status. Children's risk assessments are not fully clear, some external paintwork is in poor condition and induction training is not fully robust.

There are two requirements and three recommendations to address as a result of the current inspection.

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 restraint or discipline, a written record is made in a volume kept for the purpose which shall include the information required by this regulation. This means that the person writing the record of restraint or sanction must add their signature when finished (Regulation 17B (3) (i))	12/10/2012
2000	display in a conspicuous place the registration certificate sent to the registered provider on 1 December 2011. (s.28 Care Standards Act 2000)	19/10/2012

Recommendations

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

- ensure that safety and welfare is promoted in the home, specifically by ensuring that risk assessments include an estimation of the likelihood and seriousness of hazards that may affect young people (NMS 4.1)
- ensure the home is well-maintained and decorated. In particular this refers to flaking paintwork on the barge boards at roof level at the rear of the house (NMS 10.3)
- ensure new staff complete the Children's Workforce Development Council's induction standards within 6 months of commencing their employment at the children's home. (NMS 18.3)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Children make measurable progress as a result of the care they receive. Their sleep patterns improve so they are more able to take part in the next day's activities at school or elsewhere. They learn important personal skills such as cleaning their teeth or tying their shoe laces. They develop important daily skills such as learning how to read and tell the time; they are stimulated through a range of in-house and community-based activities and they become more settled and confident.

Parents and carers said many positive things about the care their son or daughter receive such as, 'my child is more mature now;' 'my child sleeps better now' and 'the

effects of a stay here last for two to three days after my child comes home.'

Children develop a positive view of themselves because they feel they are valued and important. As one parent said, 'the staff adapt to the child, the child doesn't have to adapt to the staff.' Children develop self-esteem and a sense of identity as a result of care that is designed specifically to meet their individual needs.

Quality of care

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

The quality of care provided by the whole team of staff is excellent.

There is a clear ethos of care which places the child at the centre. The Registered Manager and staff ensure they give top priority to children's individual needs. Close involvement with parents and other agencies helps to ensure that children make measurable progress. Parents feel particularly positive and confident about the care their child receives because of clear care plans and regular and informative communication with the staff. The use of a key worker system helps in this process.

Children behave appropriately and they have positive relationships with each other and with the staff. The use of a yellow and red warning card system and a behavioural reward system has been highly effective in improving children's behaviour. Children respond particularly well to the star-chart system which results in a prize after collecting ten stars over a series of stays.

Children's health needs are met and they make excellent progress. The home has implemented the guidance of a charity that promotes good sleep for children with learning disabilities. A member of staff who stays awake to monitor children's welfare during the night (a waking night staff) and has received training in procedures to help children settle at bedtime and to sleep well. One parent said, 'my child sleeps so much better now.' Another said, 'my child now can sleep on their own at home because they feel more settled and secure.' Where special behavioural concerns arise, the service contacts external professionals such as a community nurse who will conduct a needs assessment and provide advice to the staff.

Children take part in a wide range of activities in the house, in the garden and in the community. There is a superb range of play activities in the extensive grounds of the house. This includes bicycles, an adventure playground, exercise equipment, a sensory garden and a sand pit. One young person was putting up a tent with a member of staff in the garden at the time of the inspection and they were clearly having fun. Children also attend a local youth club where they meet others in the community and this helps them to develop their social skills. They also go to holiday parks in the summer holidays and stay there for a few nights.

The staff team are very effective in promoting children's education. Each child has a communication book which they bring back from school on an evening and which they take back the following day. This helps the care staff and the school to

communicate effectively with each other. The staff read to children and they help them to read and tell the time.

Each child has a document known as their 'About Me' file which the staff and parents find extremely useful. Each child's needs and likes and dislikes are recorded in there and agreed with the young person (where appropriate) and with their parent or carer. The document is very child-focused and specifies in detail how the child likes to be cared for and what their individual needs are.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

The staff team are effective in promoting and protecting children's safety. Sanctions are rarely used as a result of a successful behaviour reward scheme. Restraints are very rare and the staff have not had to use physical intervention since the previous inspection. However, the arrangements for recording the use of any sanction and restraint are not fully robust because the recording format does not make clear who the author of the record is. This information is important as it may be needed in the future.

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. Children take part in regular fire drills and any shortfalls are recorded and acted on. Hazards that may affect young people are assessed and recorded. This system is not fully clear because there is no evaluation of the seriousness and likelihood of individual hazards that may affect each child.

Where the behaviour of young people may put others at risk, for example by potential aggression or bullying, the Registered Manager increases staffing levels to make sure young people are supervised safely. Children have access to a counter-bullying procedure which is written in an easy to understand format.

Appropriate recruitment arrangements are in place which helps to ensure that staff employed to work with young people are suitable. Children are included in the recruitment process by setting and asking questions at interview. This helps to ensure recruitment decisions are sound and children feel valued because of this.

Leadership and management

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

The Registered Manager is experienced and well-qualified and they provide effective leadership and management of the home. They are supported by a deputy who is a registered nurse and who provides robust oversight of health and medical arrangements.

Ofsted has amended the home's conditions of registration and has sent the

registered provider a new certificate of registration. The home is still displaying the old certificate which means that parents and others are not being reliably informed about the home's registration status.

The staff team are skilled, experienced and knowledgeable. They provide consistent and safe care and have excellent working relationships with parents, carers and other agencies. The staff receive good levels of training which is refreshed every one to three years. They also receive specialised training in subjects relevant to caring for children with learning disabilities. Induction training is not fully robust because new staff are not always completing it in the recommended time period of six months.

The staff feel well-supported. They receive monthly formal supervision from the Registered Manager and they also have an annual appraisal of their performance.

The children's home provides a homely atmosphere and it is well-maintained although the external paintwork at roof level is in poor condition. This does not detract from young people's enjoyable stay at this home.

Effective monitoring arrangements are in place to ensure that shortfalls are identified and acted on quickly. This includes effective monitoring and reporting by an external visitor once a month. The Registered Manager also conducts their own internal monitoring of important issues on a regular basis. They also regularly contact parents and carers asking them to complete a satisfaction questionnaire about the quality of care. This enables performance to be measured and compared over time. The Registered Manager evaluates the findings of these surveys and makes any necessary changes to practice.

The needs of children are described clearly in various documents. Two of these, known as the 'About Me' plan and the 'Development Plan' are particularly useful and specific. They describe each child's day-to-day needs and likes and dislikes and how they should be cared for. Parents feel these documents are particularly useful in ensuring consistency of care between what they provide at home and how the staff care for their child at the children's home.

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.