

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Chris Scully
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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

This service is able to provide short term breaks or shared care for nine young people with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties, physical disabilities and learning disabilities. The home provides short stay and respite care to young people. The home is owned and managed by the local authority.

Overall effectiveness

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

Young people are happy and settled in the home. They feel safe here and are protected from significant harm because of the dedication, skills and understanding of the staff. Social workers, parents and other professionals working with young people are very complimentary about the care provided and comment upon staff going the extra mile for young people. Young people have strong, trusting relationships with staff which enable them to feel safe and secure in their care.

Care planning is good and is tailored to the specific needs of each young person. This is supported by the staff's innate understanding of each young person's diverse needs. However, there are some gaps within some health care plans. Staff work in a coordinated way with young people, their families, schools and placing authorities to ensure their individual needs are recognised and addressed.

The home is effectively managed. The Registered Manager and staff are committed to providing good quality care to young people. Records and documentation are generally well maintained, although there are some minor issues with the Statement of Purpose, accident and incident records, medication records and risk assessments. However, immediate action has been taken to address these issues.

The home is very well maintained having reopened following a refurbishment programme. The home provides a warm welcoming environment for young people although some areas are not as homely as the communal areas. Young people's views are intrinsic to the organisation of the home. They are included as fully as possible in the decisions affecting their lives and actively contribute to the running of the home. Social workers comment upon the positive impact the home has had upon young people's lives and the support provided to their families.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure young people's health is promoted in accordance with the placement plan, in particular that health care plans contain sufficient information pertaining to specific conditions (NMS 6.5)
- ensure medications are stored safely, with particular emphasis on the admissions and discharge procedures for medication (NMS 6.13)
- ensure the home provides a homely environment with particular regard to young peoples bedrooms (NMS 10.3)
- ensure the aims of the Statement of Purpose are child focussed and show how the service will meet the outcomes for children in particular, the information is clear regarding the length of some young people's stays and the duration of these (NMS 13.2)
- ensure information about the young people is clearly recorded and in a way which will be helpful in the future, in particular, that accident and incident records, and risk assessments, contain sufficient information and confidentiality is maintained. (NMS 22.5)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people are developing an awareness of those around them and an awareness of healthy lifestyles. They are encouraged to make healthier food choices and to try different foods. As a result young people enjoy a wider repertoire of meals and snacks. They enjoy a range of home cooked nutritious meals and snacks which effectively meet their specific needs. Young people make healthier choices as they request fruit and yoghurts for dessert. Young people are able to select their own evening meal from the menu and say they like the food. The home's 'healthier homes' status has enabled them to enhance the range of food options and lifestyle choices offered to young people.

Young people are encouraged to help set the table and to pour their own drinks. This encourages their independence and helps young people prepare for adulthood. Young people have access to a wide range of support services and health care professionals. Young people are able to convey to staff when they are feeling unwell. This means they receive swift and appropriate medical attention when required.

Young people's attendance at school is excellent. Young people are collected each morning by their transport providers and taken to school. This smooth transition is achieved due to the highly effective morning routines which enable young people to be up and ready for school. Excellent relationships with schools mean staff are very well informed of the young people's day. Consequently, young people are fully

supported during their stay and are able to engage in school activities.

Young people are actively encouraged to be involved in the organisation of the home. Consultation with young people is very good. Young people's views and wishes are of paramount importance. Staff ensure young people's wishes are addressed where possible, such as watching their favourite television show. Young people have contributed to the décor of the home as their art work is displayed with pride throughout the building.

Young people are able to maintain contact with their families and those who are important to them. Family members are able to contact the home at any time and are able to talk to the young people. Young people enjoy positive relationships with the other young people and enjoy spending time with them. Good relationships with the families of the young people means young people's needs are continually met during their stay. This is because of the good communication between the families and staff.

Young people are helped to prepare for adulthood as they are encouraged to develop independence skills. Young people are encouraged where possible to take responsibility for the personal needs and are supported in carrying out some household tasks, such as putting their belongings away.

Young people's individual needs are assessed and addressed in a way that effectively promotes their privacy and dignity. Young people feel valued as their differences are acknowledged, resulting in a highly inclusive environment where young people are respected as individuals.

Quality of care

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

Young people enjoy very positive relationships with the staff, which are built upon trust and respect. Young people thrive in a stable, nurturing and supportive environment. Social workers are complimentary about the home stating that the young people's relationships with staff are integral to their ability to feel safe and happy here. Correspondence from parents shows that parents value the positive relationships staff have with their children. They say 'The children are happy so we are happy.' Young people are developing an understanding of the needs of others and get on well with the other young people.

Staff are very positive role models to young people. Their calm, caring manner enables them to encourage young people to develop appropriate coping strategies and to channel any frustrations in a more productive manner. Staff say the creation of the sensory room has significantly enhanced young people's ability to manage their feelings. Clearly defined and accessible procedures are in place should a young person or family member wish to make a complaint about the setting. This includes information on how to contact the children's rights officer and ensures any concerns are handled sensitively by the home.

Detailed placement plans are in place, which enables the uniqueness of each of the young people to shine. Staff have an excellent understanding of each young person's individual need. Young people receive care which is tailored to their specific needs. This is because of the comprehensive care planning and staff's day to day practice. Individual risk assessments and health care plans are in place, but on some occasions do not contain sufficient information pertaining to some medical conditions and behaviours. This may impact upon staff's ability to provide appropriate support. Effective medication administration procedures mean young people receive the right medication at the specified times. However, the systems for admission and discharge of medication are not always sufficiently robust. This results in more medication being on site than recorded. Staff are very well trained in administering medication including those to be administered in an emergency. This ensures the safety, health and well-being of young people.

Staff have consistently high aspirations for young people. They work effectively with schools in order to support young people's learning. The introduction of a school coordinator further enhances the home's relationships with the young people's schools. Clear information is in place as to the school's expectations of the home's involvement. This includes encouraging young people to read. Discussions with school ensure young people receive consistent messages regarding certain aspects of their care such as behaviour management.

Young people enjoy a wide range of leisure activities. They attend all of the groups and clubs that they do when at home. This means young people are able to meet with their friends and keep to their individual routines. Activities are planned in consultation with young people and effectively take into account their moods and feelings when they arrive home. Young people enjoy the opportunities to spend time with their friends, going for walks on the beach and to local parks. Young people smile broadly as they explain how they are going to the shop and tell visitors about what they are going to buy with their pocket money. Others enjoy the opportunities to relax in the sensory room, or to colour in pictures with staff as they watch a favourite television programme.

The home has recently been refurbished and has been redesigned to effectively meet the diverse range of needs of the young people. Young people are cared for within three units and all have their own bedrooms, some with en-suite facilities. Communal areas are warm, welcoming and homely and the walls are adorned with young people's art work. Young people have their own bedding and curtains which are put out before their arrival. However their bedrooms are not as homely as other areas of the home. The home is situated in a cul-de-sac in a residential neighbourhood and enjoys positive relationships with its neighbours. It is within close proximity of transport links and leisure facilities.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people are protected as staff have a secure understanding of the home's safeguarding procedures. All staff have regular training in relation to safeguarding and child protection. Consequently, staff are very clear on the action to take should they have any concerns about a young person's safety or well-being. This is further supported by the provision of two designated safeguarding officers, one of whom is always available. This ensures any concerns are swiftly addressed. Staff's innate understanding of each young person means they are acutely aware of their vulnerabilities and risks. Consequently, staff are able to plan and minimise any potential risks to young people.

A young person being missing from care is not an issue. This is because young people are effectively supervised at all times. Clear procedures, which are understood by staff are in place and means should this occur young people can be quickly located. Clear, consistent boundaries mean young people are able to develop an understanding of what is suitable behaviour. Staff effectively use language based upon the young people's age, ability and level of understanding to help them differentiate between right and wrong.

Young people receive consistently high levels of praise from staff, which is proportionate to their achievements. Young people respond positively to praise and reward staff with big smiles to show their appreciation. The use of sanctions is minimal, as is any form of physical intervention. These are only used when a young person is at risk of harm. Records of physical interventions are generally well recorded.

Staff carry out regular health and safety checks of the home to ensure the premises remain physically safe and are secure. Since moving into the new premises the Registered Manager has initiated a number of alterations to enhance the safety of the young people. This includes liaising with the fire officer to alter the direction in which the gates in the courtyard open and adjustments to the locks on these. This has improved upon the home's ability to evacuate young people quickly in an emergency. Risk assessments for the home are in place and contribute to the ongoing safety of young people. Specialist equipment, such as hoists are checked weekly.

Young people are protected from harm as recruitment and selection procedures are robust. All staff are interviewed and undertake appropriate vetting procedures such as Criminal Records Bureau checks. No one is allowed to commence working at the home until all their checks are back and they have been deemed suitable. The home does occasionally use agency staff. Agency staff undergo all required checks and demonstrate they have the skills and competencies to meet the needs of the young people before commencing work. The home uses the same agency staff to provide consistency for young people. All visitors to the home are vetted and are effectively supervised during their visit.

Leadership and management

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

Young people live in a home that is effectively managed in their best interest. The enthusiasm and commitment of the Registered Manager is infectious. Consequently, all staff are highly committed to providing good quality care, which is effectively tailored to the individual and specific needs of young people. The effectiveness of this approach is evident in how happy and settled young people are in staff's care. The Statement of Purpose is shared with young people their families and placing authorities. However, there are some omissions such as the care provided to some young people. The young people's guide is a highly effective tool for communicating the home's values and care provided to young people. Its format is specifically designed to meet the needs of the young people staying in the home.

The Registered Manager has a clear and realistic understanding of the home's strengths and future areas for development. The home demonstrates a capacity for sustained improvements based upon the continued positive outcomes for young people. The Registered Manager is passionate about improving the outcomes for young people and enhancing the home's standing in the community. Many projects are in the pipeline, such as developing a committee with head teachers of the school the young people attend, neighbours and local clergy to enhance community cohesion.

The home has effectively addressed the recommendation from the last inspection regarding fire drills. Young people's safety in the home has been enhanced as the home ensures fire drills are held in the evening. This ensures staff and young people are aware of the evacuation process of an evening or early morning. Monitoring of the home is generally rigorous. However the recording of accidents and incidents on the same form leads to omissions, such as the treatment provided, young people's full names not being recorded and on some occasions confidentiality is not effectively maintained. Other records such as records of restraints and some personal risk assessments do not always contain sufficient information. Clear procedures are in place to ensure Ofsted and placing authorities are informed of any significant events. This ensures transparency and promotes the welfare of young people.

A strength of the setting is the competent and highly committed staff team. Staff have a wide range of qualifications and experience, which effectively meet the needs of the young people. Staff have very good training opportunities which include training in the administration of specific medications and personal care needs of young people. Staff are very enthusiastic about their roles and say, 'It's a pleasure to come to work.' Staff are keen to explain that they feel well supported by the Registered Manager and senior managers, and feel they have been fully included in the plans for the refurbishment.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.