

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Joanne Vyas
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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 children's home provides residential care for seven young people with learning difficulties. It is local authority owned and managed.

Overall effectiveness

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

The ethos and practice of this home is centred around the individual needs and aspirations of the young people in residence. Young people make exceptional progress in their health, education, behaviour and life skills to ensure they develop to their full potential ensuring a successful transition into adulthood. Young people are happy, relaxed and enjoy the activities provided for them.

There are some minor areas identified where improvement can be made to the records of physical intervention and sanctions. However, this has no impact on the outcomes for young people.

The staff are committed, caring and professional. A social worker said, 'I can't praise them enough'. A member of staff said about their work, 'If I can put a smile on their face it makes it all worth while'.

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 of which includes all the matters stated in this regulation. (Regulation 17B (3))	31/01/2012

Recommendations

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

- ensure information about a child is recorded clearly and in a way which will be helpful to the child when they access their files now or in the future. (NMS 22.5)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people enjoy living at this home and have positive experiences. They are at the centre of all practice and their cultural, religious and personal identity is highly respected and fully addressed. For example, young people are helped to understand their background by visiting their country of origin where they have been able to meet with their extended family. Young people benefit from a safe, nurturing and family style environment to enable them to develop a positive self-view and emotional resilience. For example, young people who have been bullied for their looks and culture are helped to build up their confidence and be proud of who they are and where they come from.

Young people make exceptional progress in this home, establishing strong routines and boundaries to enable them to create effective strategies for managing events in their lives. Young people have spoken to social work degree students about their experiences in residential care. A young person was reported to have said to the students, 'This is the only home that hasn't given up on me'. A healthcare worker said, 'They have stick ability!' meaning staff do not give up on young people no matter how challenging the situation gets. She went on to say what is good about the home which included, 'Lots of play and nurturing' and 'The staff team is consistent'.

Young people benefit from a multi-professional approach to ensure they receive a consistent therapeutic service spanning across health, education and social care. External professionals visit the home regularly providing guidance and support to young people and staff as well as training which includes communication in relation to autism and health promotion. External professionals report that communication is excellent between themselves and staff in the home. A social worker said, 'The home works in partnership with field workers and the college'.

Parents and carers are kept informed of the progress their child is making. Parents and carers are provided with appropriate means of communication, such as an interpreter, to enable them to fully participate in the care of their child.

Young people benefit from full or part time education dependent on their age. Young people enjoy their education placements and talk about their experiences with staff. A young person said, 'I love my school and have settled well at the children's home'.

Quality of care

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

Staff know and understand the young people well. A social worker said, 'Home staff have been brilliant – really committed. Really loving and warm towards her (the young person)'. Young people have excellent relationships with staff. A social worker said, 'He has a positive rapport with staff' and all agreed staff build strong relationships with young people. Staff provide a caring, nurturing and warm environment, giving consistent messages to young people.

Young people are actively involved in developing their care plan. Care plans are comprehensive and provide in-depth information for staff to provide a high level of care to young people on a day-to-day basis. All young people participate to some degree in the statutory review process. All complete a power point presentation of what has been important to them and some attend their review and take an active role. Some young people would find it too stressful to attend their review. A member of staff spoke about how one young person will be chairing her next review meeting.

Staff have a good understanding of the emotional and physical health care needs of the young people and are helping young people to understand their own health. Young people are guided towards healthy eating with the occasional treat. They have access to the appropriate healthcare professionals they require in order to develop into healthy young people.

Staff facilitate education for young people ensuring they are up and about in time to go to school or college. They attend all education meetings and communicate with the school or college as any good parent would. Staff celebrate achievement with young people. For example, all young people recently attended a 'Celebrating Achievement' conference where all were awarded with a certificate and voucher for a variety of achievements. Photographs posted on the wall of the hallway mark the occasion showing how much young people enjoyed the event.

Young people are proud of their home. A visiting healthcare professional said, 'Young people always seem settled and happy – definitely a home for them'. Communal areas are homely and comfortable. Bedrooms are highly personalised and all have en-suite amenities. The home offers excellent facilities such as a disco room which the young people thoroughly enjoy, two comfortable lounges and a landscaped garden.

Young people enjoy a range of activities inside and out of the home. They participate in physical activities to enable them to develop a healthy lifestyle. Young people said, 'I do lots of nice things. I go to the disco, youth club, shopping, have my hair styled, have girlie nights and I have nice clothes'.

Young people are supported to attend a religious institution of their choice and follow their religious and cultural beliefs. Young people who have difficulties communicating are supported well by a competent staff team using specific communication systems

for each individual.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people are safe and feel safe living in this home. Staff have a good understanding of how to keep young people safe and what makes them feel safe.

Positive behaviour is actively promoted and staff are competent at managing challenging situations. Young people are encouraged to use restorative approaches to enable them to understand how others may feel about their behaviour as well as think about their own feelings. This will help them to develop their emotional resilience. Sanctions are given but very rarely. Staff are trained in restraint and de-escalation techniques but restraint is only used as a last resort and used infrequently.

Records of restraint and sanctions are recorded in central logs but the copies retained in the logs are carbonated copies which are faded and difficult to read. Additionally, records of restraints state criminal offence, absconding and disruption as reasons for restraint. These are not legal reasons for restraint in children's homes but equally young people have only been restrained when a young person is harming themselves or others or causing damage to property. Furthermore, the central log for sanctions does not state the effectiveness or consequence of the sanction. However, sanctions are given fairly and appropriately. As sanctions and restraint are rarely carried out, this has had no impact on the outcomes for young people.

Staff have access to comprehensive risk assessments which are informative and enable staff to reduce risks. These enable staff to keep young people safe. Furthermore, risk reduction does not lead to an institutional feel and young people are supported to take appropriate risks to promote healthy growth and development. For example, young people are enabled to walk to school or college with their friends after careful risk assessment and guidance from staff. This has been a huge step towards independence and making their transition into adulthood.

New staff are subject to a good vetting system before they start working with young people. Staff have a Criminal Records Bureau check completed at enhanced level, their identification checked and references sought. The home is physically safe and appropriately secure, ensuring young people are safe.

Leadership and management

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

Young people are cared for by an enthusiastic, highly motivated and dynamic staff team who are qualified, experienced and caring. They are well supported by each other and the management team. Staff consistently said that they love working in the home with the young people. The staff team clearly have the interests of the

young people at heart. Staff are well trained in all mandatory areas.

The current manager is currently in the process of registering with Ofsted. However, he can effectively demonstrate a consistent and continuing capacity for improvement, communicating high expectations to staff and challenging weaknesses.

The manager makes good use of a range of monitoring activities such as Regulation 33 and 34 reports to ensure the home operates to a high standard within its Statement of Purpose. It is clear that the manager actively keeps up to date with new legislation and practice developments to improve the quality of the service provided. The manager effectively and efficiently manages the home.

Equality and diversity practice is **outstanding**.