

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC043732
Inspection date	11/07/2012
Inspector	Caroline Oldham
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	01/03/2012
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The service is a home for up to seven young people with a learning and/or physical disability and it is managed by the local authority.

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 quality of care in the home is good, and staff work extremely hard to provide highly personalised care. Each young person has a clear, very detailed care plan, designed to meet their specific needs. Risk assessments are regularly reviewed as young people take on additional learning, and behaviours change. Young people make good progress in relation to their starting points through consistent care, supported by external experts. Where appropriate young people are involved in their care plans and reviews, and parents are kept fully informed and involved.

The young people display happiness and pleasure about the care that they are offered. Parents and social workers say that young people express positive views about the home. Some young people verbalise their views and say they like the staff and the activities. Young people are involved in some aspects of decision making, such as their choice of bedroom colour, decoration, ornaments and toys, and enjoy choosing activities. However, young people's views about the day-to-day running of the home are not documented.

Leaders and the manager have thorough systems in place to monitor progress, and are fully aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the home. There are very good systems being developed to identify trends and issues of concern using the skills of the staff team. Staff feel well supported, but formal supervision is irregular. Staff have access to a broad range of training, including refresher training and specialist training. The staff team are enthusiastic and caring, and young people benefit from this; their social skills and behaviours significantly improve over time.

Young people are kept safe through thorough risk assessments and safe working

practices. Physical intervention is used to keep young people safe, and behaviours are improved through rewards and encouragement. Staff are well trained in safe working practices. Consequently young people make significant progress in keeping themselves safe and avoiding potential dangers.

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
27 (2001)	ensure that all persons employed receive appropriate supervision. (Regulation 27 (4) (a))	31/08/2012

Recommendations

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

- evidence that the children's wishes and feelings are acted upon, in the day-to-day running of the home. (NMS 1.1)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people develop a more positive self view, and learn to take increasing care of themselves. This is demonstrated in a variety of ways: through a reduction in self-harm; taking more pride in their appearance; washing and brushing hair; and painting finger nails. They make and form attachments with the staff, and to some extent with each other. Young people develop a greater awareness and understanding of their background through contact arrangements which are well supported by staff. Consequently, young people who have been reluctant to visit home are now making regular visits to parents, and parents are enjoying constructive, fruitful visits with their children at the home. In addition to working closely with parents, staff also work well with other agencies such as schools and community mental health services. This supports young people's learning and their health, and consequently young people become less anxious, learn new skills and take better care of themselves.

All school-age young people are in education, and attendance is high. There is a very good working relationship between the home and the school, ensuring good

communication and working together to meet the needs of the young people. Those young people not in education are given activities and tasks to develop their independence skills, to assist with their transition to their next placement. Consequently young people enjoy their learning and they make progress.

Every young person is given simple additional tasks to do, and all are encouraged and assisted to tidy their bedrooms, change the bedding and use a washing machine. All make their own breakfast and supper with appropriate help and support from staff. In addition, independence packages are currently being drawn up for two young people, and these are highly individualised to their specific abilities. This helps to make a smooth and successful transition process.

Quality of care

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

Young people clearly enjoy the company of the staff team and express this in a variety of ways, such as laughing and smiling and saying, 'I like them all!'. Some are able to show care and consideration for others and will help less mobile young people, such as clearing a plate from the table. Staff use highly individualised behaviour strategies to support young people in developing their behaviour patterns and young people have made significant progress in managing their behaviours because of these approaches. Consequently young people increase their social awareness and skills, become less anxious and develop new patterns of behaviour.

Staff are persistent in their desire to help young people to behave in appropriate ways and to set clear limits in place. They adhere to the agreed strategies to ensure consistency of approach which is essential to help young people make changes. Consequently young people gradually learn boundaries to behaviour and learn not to harm themselves through repetitive actions. The staff team work very well together. This is a real strength of the home, as there have been a significant number of new staff who have become settled in to their work very quickly. They use team meetings, handovers, and good documentation to ensure they deliver consistent care. Consequently young people receive consistent high quality care and consistent messages.

The complaints procedure is displayed and details given in the Statement of Purpose in addition to the Children's Guide. Young people say that they are happy and could talk to staff if this were not so. Additionally parents are encouraged to raise any concerns that they may have, but all say that they are very happy with the care that their children receive. Young people influence the menus with their likes and dislikes and the activities are tailored to their interests, however, there is little documented evidence of how young people's views influence the day-to-day running of the home.

All young people have extremely complex care needs. There are excellent, clear and detailed care plans for each of the young people, these include information about their cultural backgrounds, and personal identities. Where possible young people are actively involved in the plans that concern them, and staff provide appropriate

support. Staff review the plans and revise targets as young people make progress, for example, a young person may learn to make a simple snack, and this will then progress to preparing a simple meal. Staff use a range of communication systems with young people; they are very skilled at interpreting non-verbal signals and sounds to ensure that a young person is happy and comfortable.

Young people have access to a broad range of activities, many of which are tailored to their individual needs and interests. Some enjoy just spending time relaxing, listening to music or watching TV; others prefer to be more active, playing in the ball pool and soft play area, or riding-on or playing with equipment in the garden. Staffing levels ensure that individual attention can always be given to young people to enable them to get the most from the activity.

The home provides a healthy environment for young people; meals are freshly prepared by professional cooks and fresh vegetables and produce are always used. Fresh fruit is always available. Some young people have made excellent progress in learning to enjoy eating food and put on weight, and to maintain a healthy weight. All are encouraged to develop a healthy lifestyle through attending health appointments, eating well and taking exercise. All young people are registered with the local General Practitioner, dentist and optician. In addition, other professionals are involved with young people, and staff fully support appointments to meet young people's psychological and medical needs. Medication is very well managed and monitored, and where appropriate young people are supported to self-administer with the appropriate risk assessments and staff support in place. Young people are encouraged to enjoy an active lifestyle including playing on the equipment in the garden such as the climbing frame, slides and swings, going swimming and going for walks.

Staff actively support young people to attend education, and they have established an excellent working relationship with the local school which most young people attend. They have frequent daily communication when they take and collect young people, and they have more detailed conversations via phone calls and share with email. This helps to provide consistent care and develop new strategies to help young people make the best use of their opportunities.

The home is situated close to the centre of the town. There are shops, parks and other facilities close by. The home is very well maintained and staff have recently redecorated some rooms with murals and ornaments which look particularly homely and attractive. Photographs of young people add to the homely feel. The layout is spacious, and there is a large, well equipped garden.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

All staff all receive regular training and refresher training in child protection procedures. There are comprehensive individual risk assessments for each young person which are updated as targets and plans are revised. Staffing levels are

frequently high for most activities and situations, to ensure that young people are kept safe from harm. There have been no incidents of young people going missing, or coming to harm. Staff provide consistent boundaries, and these are continually reinforced. Sometimes staff use physical restraint to stop a young person from hurting themselves or others or to gently guide them away from a situation. Consequently young people's behaviours have made significant improvements, given their starting points. Sanctions are very rare occurrences, as desired behaviour is encouraged through rewards, such as a hand massage.

There has been significant staff recruitment in recent months. The recruitment and selection process is very thorough, and comprehensive checks are made to ensure that young people are always cared for by appropriately vetted and experienced staff. This ensures that all staff are suitable to work with young people.

The environment is very well maintained and kept safe through a system of internal safety checks and risk assessments. In addition, services such as electricity, electrical appliances and fire fighting equipment are regularly checked by the appropriate professional companies. There is an emergency escape plan which is practiced regularly so that staff and young people know what to do in an emergency. Visitors to the home have their identification checked and they are signed in and out.

Leadership and management

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

The manager is held in high regard by staff, and parents. The requirement and recommendations from the last inspection have been addressed, and Regulation 34 reports are now received by Ofsted. The children's guide has now been updated to incorporate the required information and is now available in different formats and newly appointed staff have phone verification of references and checks of previous employers clearly followed up. The registered person carries out comprehensive monthly monitoring visits, which always include some consultation with young people where possible. The manager also has a very comprehensive system of internal audits including a thorough audit of young people's files.

There is a comprehensive Statement of Purpose, and the manager regularly updates changes. Placing authorities are clear about the aims and objectives of the home and what services and facilities it provides. They say that the home provides a very welcoming environment for the young people, and their parents and carers. Parents speak very highly of the home and staff, some are regular and frequent visitors, and they are able to do activities with their child such as cooking and sharing meal times together. Where practical young people helped to understand the purpose of their placement in the home and their future plans, and they are actively involved in the review process. Staff are very clear about their roles, and are proactive in working with other agencies to help progress a young person's development. For example, to support a young person who refused to eat food, a meeting was arranged with the relevant experts; dietician and cook, and food was liquidised and other strategies introduced to promote eating.

Due to increasing the numbers of residents to seven, the home has needed to increase staffing levels. This has necessitated a significant number of new staff joining the team over the past 6 months. However, all say their induction has been very thorough, and the team work well together. Staff rotas are designed to ensure that where agency staff are used they are well supported by appropriately qualified and experienced staff. Staff receive very good training opportunities, encompassing refresher training, professional development and specific skills based training to meet the special needs of the young people. All staff are suitably qualified, completing their induction or professional qualifications. All staff receive some supervision, and say that they are well supported, but formal supervision does not occur at a regular frequency as set out in the Statement of Purpose. The manager confirms that she is well supported by senior management. The home is financially well resourced.

A real strength of the home are the excellent care planning documents, these are clear and easy to follow and set out targets and expectations. They are regularly reviewed and revised and demonstrate that staff have a very thorough approach to meeting young people's individual needs. All documentation is kept in a locked filing cabinet within a locked office.

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.