

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Caroline Oldham
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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 the staff team know the children and young people very well, and so are able to provide highly personalised care. Each child or young person has a clear, very detailed care plan that is designed to meet their specific needs. Although day-to-day records do not reflect the excellent work that is taking place, 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 in all aspects of their child's care.

Children and young people are well cared for and show happiness and pleasure. Parents and social workers say that children and young people are calmer, like the staff, and are making good progress. Young people are involved some aspects of the home, such as, choosing activities, although their views about the developments of the home are not documented. Children's and young people's health needs are generally very well met. However, occasional oversight regarding initial health checks and a lack of clarity about responsibility for giving medication means that children's health needs are not always met.

Leaders and the manager have thorough systems in place to monitor progress, and are fully aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the home. Currently systems to identify trends and issues of concern are not being completed regularly or submitted to Ofsted. Staff feel well supported, through team meetings and supervision, although some elements of training are not being provided. The staff team are dedicated and caring and young people benefit; so that social skills and behaviours significantly improve over time.

Young people are kept safe through thorough safe working practices which are well risk assessed. Physical intervention is used to keep children and young people safe and behaviours improve through imaginative rewards strategies and calm, consistent care. Consequently, young people make significant progress in keeping themselves safe and avoiding potential dangers.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure that the wishes, feelings and views of the children are taken into account in developing the home (NMS 1.7)
- ensure that children's health is promoted in accordance with their placement plan and staff are clear about what responsibilities and decisions are delegated to them, in particular with regard to initial health appointments (NMS 6.5)
- ensure that prescribed medication is given to the child in accordance with the prescription (NMS 6.14)
- ensure that the key worker within the home monitors the child's Placement Plan to ensure that the requirements of the Placement Plan are implemented in the day -to-day care of the child (NMS 25.1)
- ensure that monitoring reports in relation to the quality of care and the matters set out in Schedule 6 are completed at six monthly intervals. A copy of every report should be sent to HMCI within 28 days of completion (Vol 5, statutory guidance, para 3.14)
- ensure that there is a good quality training programme which equips staff with the skills required to meet the needs of the children and the purpose of the setting, in particular, in relation to moving and handling (NMS 18.1)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

All the children and young people in this home have complex learning needs, and frequently physical disabilities. They are all happy in the home, and they thrive in the calm, caring environment; building confidence and their self-esteem. For example, they can carry out simple tasks such as getting their outdoor clothing, or getting dressed, without becoming distracted by other things.

Children and young people's health is good, due to the healthy lifestyle that they all enjoy, with plenty of opportunities for exercise within each child or young person's capabilities. All children have a good diet, and food is carefully presented in a way

that they can enjoy their food without feeling overwhelmed by choice or quantity. Generally staff show good attention to their health needs ensuring that children have the correct medication at the correct time to meet their physical and mental health needs.

The children and young people are gradually becoming more confident in their skills to prepare them for adult life. They learn to wash their hands before meals, sit at the table and clear away their dishes. Some learn to prepare simple meals such as breakfast and some help with laundry tasks.

Children and young people benefit from appropriate contact with family, friends and other people who are important to them. It is a real strength of the home that contact is very well supported, so that children and young people enjoy positive and rewarding times with those close to them.

Quality of care

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

The large staff team work well together; they are made up of an established long standing team members and a number of new staff who have joined over the past 12 months. They know the children and young people very well and have excellent working relationships. They are able to understand the wishes and feelings of children and young people who struggle to express themselves and endeavour to meet their needs. For example, one young person loves to look through catalogues but often accidentally damages them, so they wrote to the company and obtained some laminated copies which are more robust. Young people are happy and content because their needs are met by staff who understand them.

Children and young people influence the care that they receive, and examples were shared of choices that they make, for example, choosing activities. Staff are very observant to assess what a child or young person likes or what causes them distress. However, although attempts have been made to capture this information more formally in residents' meetings, these have not been successful; so there is no evidence of how the children and young people influence the development of the home.

Young people have clear, detailed care plans that set out their specific, individualised needs. Care plans include information about disability, religious and cultural backgrounds. Monthly summaries sets out the aims and objectives, tasks for development, work undertaken to achieve the tasks set and progress made. However, daily recording does not support these documents and recording lacks consistency. For example, there are some excellent strategies to encourage positive behaviour but lack of consistency in recording does not demonstrate progress.

Children and young people all have complex health needs. When a child or young person is admitted, they are registered with the local health professionals; but the system is not closely monitored and initial appointments are not always set up

quickly. However, staff are very attentive to the health needs of young people and tenacious in pursuing investigations where they feel that a child or young person is not well. Examples were shared of when a child appeared unwell and due to their persistence a serious illness was diagnosed and appropriate treatment prescribed.

The medication administration system is generally robust, but a lack of clarity with regard to staff responsibility can lead to non-administration of medication, which is detrimental to the health of the children and young people. All children and young people have a healthy diet and care is taken to present food in a way that encourages appropriate portions and weight gain. This is a real strength of the provision. Children and young people enjoy many activities either playing with go-karts in the garden or swimming, drama and youth clubs.

Social workers and independent reviewing officers speak very highly about the home and are pleased with the care that the children and young people receive. They say that they have noticed how the children and young people have made very good progress; for example, their speech is significantly improving and physical development such as mobility is becoming stronger. The staff work hard to ensure that all visitors are made welcome; both social workers and parents.

All children and young people attend the local school and there are excellent relationships between the staff. Regular correspondence is maintained via email, phone and the school-to-home communications books. Where behavioural issues are identified, staff work together to identify a plan which is followed by all in caring for the child. This ensures that children and young people get the very best from their time in education and work can be carried over into the home if necessary. Consequently, children and young people enjoy going to school and their attendance is very good.

Young people are sensitively prepared for transition to adult care settings. Good use is made of 'social stories' which are read regularly to young people to get them used to the idea of somewhere new. Visits and photographs all help to aid information gathering. In addition, young people are encouraged to learn some independence skills such as making their own breakfast, undertaking some laundry skills and other tasks. Staff are sensitive to the amount of support required to help young people grow in confidence and learn new skills.

The home is close to the centre of the town and next to the school that most young people attend. There are shops, parks and other facilities close by. It is very well maintained, and murals and ornaments make the home look cosy and attractive. 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.

Staff work very hard to keep children and young people safe in the home. They continually review strategies to keep young people safe, especially where young

people may try to hurt themselves or others. Some young people are very sensitive to their environment and noise; staff make special arrangements to make these children and young people feel safe. When out in the community children and young people are kept safe through various strategies including higher staffing levels and using wrist straps. There have been no incidents of children or young people going missing.

All staff receive safeguarding training and their practice and knowledge is good. Staff are very clear about how they would deal with any issues of concern. There are comprehensive risk assessments for every young person and these are regularly reviewed and updated.

Staff regularly review their strategies for managing behaviour and are particularly imaginative; this is a real strength of the staff team. They also use the expertise of other professionals to inform their practice. Incidents are quite high in this home as some young people require regular physical interventions to stop them hurting themselves or others. The minimum amount of intervention is used and usually it is to guide a child away from a situation or person. This helps to keep all young people safe and to feel safe. Sanctions are rarely used, but systems of rewards are used to encourage positive behaviour. These work well and young people are delighted to receive simple tokens for good behaviour which can be exchanged for treats.

The staff recruitment and selection process is rigorous and comprehensive checks are made to ensure that young people are always cared for by appropriately experienced staff. The manager is actively involved in all recruitment and has built up a good team. Support staff also cover as relief staff and so they know the children very well; this offers excellent consistency for the children and 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. Visitors to the home have their identification checked on arrival and they are signed in and out. Consequently, young people live and are cared for in a safe environment and are kept safe.

Leadership and management

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

The home is generally very well managed by the Registered Manager and her senior team. The registered person carries out comprehensive monthly monitoring visits and the manager also has a comprehensive system of internal audits. However, checks and reviews of the quality of care under Regulation 34 have not been sent to Ofsted within the recommended timescales. This lack of strategic overview prevents a coherent plan for the home. Although developments do take place on a regular basis, they are ad hoc rather than part of an overall strategy.

Staff are very clear about their roles and confirm that they are well-supported and

valued by the manager. Team meetings occur regularly and are well attended. They are opportunities for staff to hold comprehensive discussions about the children and young people and where changes may be made to care and behaviour management strategies. All discussions are well recorded and decisions are logged separately with a member of staff identified to take this forward. This system works well. Evidence in children and young people's files shows these issues carried forward. For example, a very simple 'time-out' strategy was not working well and so an alternative strategy was put in place.

There is a clear, well-written Statement of Purpose which explains the aims and objectives of the home. The placing authority is clear about the aims and objectives of the home and the services and facilities it provides. Where able, children and young people are clear about how they will be cared for when appropriate future plans are presented in a non-threatening way that they can understand.

The staff team work well together. A superb staff rota shows very good staffing levels across day and night shifts which ensure that young people receive the levels of care that they need. Generally staff receive regular training, although some aspects have not been provided for, such as, training in moving and handling. All staff are otherwise suitably qualified or working towards professional qualifications.

The home is financially well resourced. Due to the excellent rota planning all staff receive regular, good quality supervision, and staff say that they are able to seek advice and support whenever necessary. This ensures a confident staff group who are able to meet the objectives of the care plans of the young people.

Care planning documents are currently under review; generally they are clear, working documents that provide a good working format with sufficient detail, that are easy to use. All documentation is kept in a locked filing cupboard within a lockable office. The home is establishing excellent working relationships with the local community and other agencies, for example, Children's and Adolescent Mental Health Services and the local school.

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* and the evaluation schedule for the inspection of children's homes.