

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Lynn O'Driscoll
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This home offers care and accommodation, for up to four young people, of both genders, who have severe learning disabilities.

It is part of a wider private organisation that offers transition from this home to adult residential provision registered with the Care Quality Commission. It also runs an independent 52 week school. It is co-educational and caters for pupils and students from the age of 7 to 19 years old.

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**.

Young people are safe and secure at this home. As staff work specifically with individual young people, they establish good trusting relationships. Young people also benefit from highly personalised care which meets their unique and extremely complex needs. Given their starting points, young people are making exceptional progress. Examples include: educational achievements; eating and sleeping patterns; communication; self-care; behaviours; and mobility. The latter includes a young person, now walking, who was previously wheelchair dependent.

Parents and social workers who advocate on behalf of the young people, are very positive about the quality of care provided in this home. One parent described the change in his son since moving to this home as, 'breath-taking.'

This service clearly demonstrates continuous improvement making full use of regular multi- disciplinary meetings to ensure young people's safety and well-being and to consistently improve outcomes. The manager is very clear about the strengths of this service and the key areas for development. Appropriate development plans are in place to address the latter.

There are three breaches of Regulation arising from this inspection and five recommendations. The main issues are to demonstrate stringent monitoring

processes and regular consultation with parents, social workers and independent reviewing officers on the quality of care provided. In respect to staffing, a few have not completed the required qualifications in a timely manner. Moreover, some do not receive regular supervision to ensure continued competence and to support them in their respective roles. The children's guide is also not available in a range of formats to suit the individual needs of all the young people currently living in the home. This is especially important because this document provides details on how to directly contact independent advocacy, advice and support.

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 all staff receive appropriate training and supervision (Regulation 27(4)(a))	30/11/2012
33 (2001)	ensure monthly Regulation 33 reports and six monthly Regulation 34 reports include the outcomes of consultations with parents and social workers (Regulations 33 and 34(3))	31/10/2012
34 (2001)	demonstrate close monitoring of risk assessments, fire safety practices and restraint records, evidencing that any shortfalls identified are efficiently addressed. (Regulation 34, Schedule 6)	31/10/2012

Recommendations

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

- ensure the views of parents, social workers and independent reviewing officers are regularly sought on the quality of care provided at the home (NMS 1.4)
- ensure restraint records always clearly detail the de-escalation techniques attempted to try to avoid the use of a physical intervention (NMS 3.13)
- produce and regularly review risk assessments, in agreement with placing authorities and parents on the practice of locking doors, and, demonstrating specific restrictions for one child do not impose similar restrictions on others who do not require it (NMS 10.4 and 10.8)
- ensure the children's guide is produced in a range of formats to meet the individual needs of the all the young people accommodated (NMS 13.6)
- demonstrate that all unqualified staff are working towards a level 3 Young People's Workforce Diploma within six months of confirmation of employment.

(NMS 18.5)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people's physical, medical, emotional and behavioural needs are extremely well met. None of the young people smoke, drink alcohol or take illicit drugs. Young people are helped to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

Young people particularly love taking part in the very good range of meaningful activities on offer both in the home and the community. This includes conservation activities at the local park, swimming and horse riding lessons. This significantly increases their social interactions and increases their self-esteem and confidence. They can also all now tolerate having their hair cut at the local barbers. One independent reviewing officer described this as, 'a massive achievement.'

They are all treated and respected as individuals in their own right and benefit from highly individualised care to address their unique needs and personal preferences. Consequently, they are developing a clear sense of identity and their personalities are gradually shining through.

School attendance is excellent. This includes a young person who had not previously had a school placement for over six months. Moreover, given their starting points, all the young people are making exceptional progress.

Young people exercise genuine choices about contact. Consequently, they are very happy with the current arrangements in place.

The daily life of this home provides ability appropriate opportunities for all the young people to develop social and independent skills. This maximises their individual potentials, with some excellent outcomes. Examples include: significantly improved eating and sleeping patterns and challenging behaviours, increased mobility, communication and self-care skills. One young person really enjoys cooking and another likes to help to clean the windows and other shiny surfaces.

Quality of care

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

Parents confirm that their views are listened to and respected by this home and they are fully involved in care planning. Consequently, they are highly satisfied with the quality of care provided at this home. They say staff are particularly accommodating in supporting contact.

Young people benefit from highly personalised care in line with their comprehensive care plans which are frequently reviewed and revised if young people are not happy about any aspect of their care. Their complex needs are extremely well met. One

parent said, 'the staff have worked patiently, consistently and successfully with my son to get him to swallow his food'. Consequently, he is now a healthy weight'.

Gradual and extremely sensitive admission and discharge processes enable young people to move at their pace, so they settle quickly. It also ensures those already living in the home are fully prepared for the inevitable changes. This successfully avoids any unnecessary anxieties.

Parents and social workers have successfully advocated to secure funding to enable young adults to move on to adult residential provision within this company. This demonstrates their high satisfaction with the quality of care provided by the company as a whole.

All children and young people are supported and enabled to share their wishes and feelings irrespective of how they communicate. They exercise genuine choice regarding: the home they move on to; the staff who work with them; the activities they take part in; the meals they prefer to eat; and the décor and furnishings in their individual bedrooms.

Moreover, young people's views significantly influence the day-to-day running of the home. This reinforces the fact that their opinions matter and are valued, which in turn increases their self-esteem and confidence. For example, the company enabled one young person to move to this home which offers a quieter, calmer environment. This has had a very positive impact on their behaviours. Staff have also advocated very strongly to agree a flexible school timetable ensuring excellent attendance and sustained progress. Another example includes, enabling a young person to move into a smaller bedroom, which has significantly improved sleep patterns.

There is limited documentary evidence of regular consultations with parents, social workers and independent reviewing officers on the quality of care provided. However, the feedback received via Ofsted is extremely complimentary. Parents describe this service as, 'fabulous' and, 'second to none'. One father said, 'my son has made marvellous progress. He is always happy and more outgoing. The staff are wonderful. I couldn't ask for more.'

Staff support individuals in school every day to ensure consistent practices and to maintain their school placements. Young people's good health and well-being is also actively promoted at this home, including regular physical exercise. Young people particularly benefit from a qualified nurse who regularly visits the home. Consequently, she has secured a very good relationship with the young people and has an excellent understanding of their individual health needs.

A particular strength of this home is the outstanding range of appropriate specialist services staff access for young people in a timely manner to meet their unique and highly complex physical and medical needs. There are also robust procedures in place to ensure the safe administration of first aid and medication.

Staff work proactively and effectively with a number of other relevant agencies and

professionals to secure some outstanding outcomes for young people. For example, a consultant child and adolescent neurological psychiatrist wrote, 'obsessional behaviours are being very expertly managed by this home.'

Staff also use their expertise to advise health professionals on how to best meet young people's unique needs and specific behaviours. This has proved highly effective in ensuring young people feel safe and secure during routine health checks and operations.

The housekeeper has 'happily' worked at this home for over 10 years and is a significant individual to the young people. She takes great pride in her role in ensuring a very clean and homely atmosphere at all times and, the provision of homemade, nutritious meals. A dedicated maintenance team also ensures any minor repairs are efficiently addressed. A tastefully decorated and furnished second lounge has recently been created offering more choice of communal rooms.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people feel safe and secure in this home and say the care and support is good. They also confirm that the rules in this home are fair. Good behaviour and effort is positively reinforced, which is having the desired effect.

There is very careful matching of the groups of young people living in the home to ensure compatibility. High staffing ratios also ensures close monitoring and supervision in line with individual risk assessments. This means this service is highly effective in preventing incidents of bullying and no young people go missing.

Moreover, staff have a very good knowledge of the young people, so they are able to recognise potential triggers and successfully diffuse challenging behaviours. Consequently, restraints have significantly reduced. This also demonstrates that young people are much calmer and happier. A social worker said, 'this home ensures very good outcomes for young people with highly complex needs. In particular, previously disruptive and aggressive behaviours have improved. One young person is like a different child and now engages in activities.'

However, not all restraint records are sufficiently detailed to clearly demonstrate the de-escalation techniques used to try to avoid the use of a physical intervention. They are also not consistently scrutinised by the manager in a timely manner to ensure safe and effective practice at all times. Moreover, most, but not all staff have renewed their restraint training.

A policy is in place in regard to the use of restrictive measures to protect young people. An example being the locking of doors. However, there are no risk assessments evidencing agreement by placing authorities and parents and demonstrating that specific restrictions for one individual does not impose similar restrictions on others who do not require it.

All the staff receive annual safeguarding training. This ensures they respond appropriately in the event of any disclosures of abuse.

All the required safety certificates are in place to evidence a safe and well-maintained building. However, fire safety processes are not sufficiently robust in that internal fire safety checks are not consistently undertaken at the required frequencies.

Highly effective recruitment and selection processes are in place ensure a safe and competent workforce.

Leadership and management

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

This home is adequately resourced to meet the needs of the young people currently living in the home. It is well managed by a suitably qualified, highly experienced and child focussed individual.

The Statement of Purpose is regularly updated to ensure it accurately describes the current aims, practices and staffing structures in the home.

The one requirement made at the last inspection has been satisfactorily addressed. Consequently, children and young people or their representatives know how to make a complaint should the need arise.

Nine recommendations were also made. In response, young people now have direct access to independent advocates. The children's guide has also been revised providing contact details of external support and advice. It is in a child friendly, pictorial format. This meets the needs of the majority, but not all, of the young people living in the home.

A rolling programme of countering bullying courses has also been introduced across the company as a whole. As regards restraint records, individual pictorial communication cards have been produced explaining to young people in a meaningful way, why they have been restrained and whether medical attention is required.

Specific staff support young people's transition to adult provision from this home to maintain consistency of care.

Staff say this is a good company to work for, providing a thorough induction programme and on-going relevant training opportunities to gain the competencies required of their respective roles. Consequently, staff are highly motivated and retention rates are good. Moreover, young people are looked after by an experienced staff team who are highly responsive to individual needs. They have also established excellent working relationships with other agencies to safeguard and promote the welfare of the young people. However, a few staff are not completing a recognised qualification in a timely manner. Moreover, some staff are still not receiving regular

formal individual supervision, but this is not as yet impacting negatively on the outcomes of young people at the home.

Staff benefit from monthly team meetings with open and honest debates. They confirm that the manager is very approachable and accessible for on-going advice, guidance and support. They also feel their views are listened to in respect to continually improving upon the service provided.

Established monthly monitoring systems are in place. Regulation 33 reports are forwarded to Ofsted in a timely manner and provide very detailed information about each young person's; behaviours; health needs; progress at school; activities; and, contact arrangements. This level of detailed monitoring ensures that outcomes for young people are being monitored and that improvements are secured. However, Regulation 34 reports are not sufficiently robust in that some shortfalls are not identified and efficiently addressed. Examples include, risk assessments, restraint records and the frequency of fire safety checks. Although positive feedback has been received as part of this inspection, neither of these reports demonstrate regular consultations with parents and placing authorities on the quality of care provided.

Young people's files are in very good order. They provide an accurate and very positive account of their background, progress, achievements and future goals.

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.