

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Lynn O'Driscoll
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	22/02/2012
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This home is registered to provide 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 which 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 **adequate**.

Young people benefit from long term, stable placements. They feel safe and secure at this home and enjoy good trusting relationships with the staff. They also benefit from highly personalised care which meets their unique and extremely complex needs. Given their starting points, young people are making good progress. Examples include: educational achievements; sleeping patterns; communication; self-care; and behaviours.

Parents and social workers who advocate on behalf of the young people, are very positive about the quality of care provided in this home.

This home has demonstrated a capacity for sustained improvement based on its performance over the last three years and the continued progress young people have made. Full use of regular multidisciplinary meetings ensure young people's safety and well-being, and serve to consistently improve outcomes. The management team is also clear about the strengths of the service, and appropriate development plans are in place to ensure continued improvements.

However, seven requirements and four recommendations have arisen from this inspection. This suggests a recent decrease in attention to detail. For example, children's guides have outdated information about contacting Ofsted. It also shows

that the monitoring systems in place are not always effective in that some shortfalls identified are not efficiently addressed.

In general, although practice remains generally sound, this is not always adequately reflected in the home's documentation. Examples include records of both restraint and medication administration. Some shortfalls have the potential to compromise the safety of young people. This includes delays in some staff completing refresher training courses, and lack of clarity in respect to fire evacuation procedures. Others relate to the lack of regular consultations with stakeholders to ensure an independent oversight of the quality of care provided and to inform future developments. Moreover, records suggest that not all staff are receiving regular supervision or annual appraisals to ensure their continued competence and to support them in their respective roles.

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
20 (2001)	demonstrate that, at all times, there is at least one person on duty who has a first aid qualification (Regulation 20(e))	12/11/2012
21 (2001)	ensure there are robust arrangements in place for the recording of all medicines administered (Regulation 21(c))	12/11/2012
17B (2001)	ensure restraint records include all the required information, and in particular, details of any medical treatment administered to the child concerned (Regulation 17B(3))	12/11/2012
32 (2001)	ensure adequate precautions are taken against the risk of fire, and in particular: demonstrate all the recommendations from the fire risk assessment have been satisfactorily addressed; all staff receive timely training in fire prevention; and staff are fully aware of the procedures to follow if young people refuse to leave the building during a fire drill (Regulation 32(1) (a))	30/11/2012
4 (2001)	ensure the individualised children's guides are regularly updated to include the address and telephone number of the HMCI (Regulation 4(3)(c))	30/11/2012
27 (2001)	demonstrate that all staff receive appropriate training, supervision and appraisal of their work (Regulation 27(4)(a))	31/12/2012
34 (2001)	ensure Regulation 34 reports are evaluative and include consultations with children, parents and placing authorities. (Regulation 34)	30/11/2012

Recommendations

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

- ensure all staff receive sufficient training on health and hygiene issues and first aid (NMS 6.7)
- ensure there is a written record of all first aid given to each child (NMS 6.15)
- demonstrate that the views of children's social workers and independent reviewing officers are regularly sought on the quality of care provided in the home and that this informs future practice (NMS 1.4)
- ensure appropriate action is taken to efficiently address any shortfalls identified following Regulation 33 and 34 monitoring, and in particular, gaps in recordings, and the repair or replacement of the stair bannister. (NMS 21.2)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people's physical and behavioural needs are particularly well met at this home. None of the young people smoke, drink alcohol or take illicit drugs. They benefit from: a clean and healthy environment; homemade nutritious meals; and regular physical exercise.

Young people enjoy taking part in the good range of meaningful activities on offer, both in the home and the community. This includes charity events, trips to the zoo and circus, growing vegetables, swimming and horse riding lessons. This significantly increases their social interactions and increases their self-esteem and confidence.

Each young person is treated and respected as an individual in their own right and benefits from individualised care to address their unique needs and personal preferences. They thoroughly enjoy regular contact with their family in the knowledge of good practical and emotional support from the staff. Consequently, they maintain a strong sense of identity and belonging.

School attendance is good and, given their starting points, all the young people are making significant progress.

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: communication; eating and sleeping patterns; challenging behaviours, toileting; and other self-care skills.

Quality of care

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

Key strengths of this home include the excellent working relationships established with parents, and the support they are offered. 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. This includes travelling long distances with young people and remaining in the vicinity in case they are needed.

Young people benefit from highly personalised care in line with their comprehensive and individualised care plans, and their complex needs are well met. Staff have built up strong, trusting relationships with the young people. They also have an excellent understanding of the young people's unique vocalisations and behaviours. This means they can respond positively to their specific wishes and feelings.

However, there is limited documentary evidence of regular consultations with social workers and independent reviewing officers on the quality of care provided. This is unfortunate because the feedback received via Ofsted is complimentary.

Staff support individual young people in school every day to ensure consistent practices and to successfully maintain their school placements. The provision of the most up-to-date electronic equipment also significantly aids communication and learning.

Young people's good health and well-being are actively promoted at this home. Staff, for example, always ensure routine health appointments, immunisations and statutory medicals are up to date. Staff also advocate to ensure young people access appropriate specialist services in a timely manner to meet their unique and highly complex behavioural needs. Examples include domiciliary dental visits, sensory therapists and emotional and mental health practitioners.

However, staff rotas do not demonstrate that there is a qualified first aider on duty at all times to attend efficiently and appropriately to minor incidents. Moreover, there is not a consistent system in place for the recording of any first aid administered to young people.

Young people particularly benefit from a qualified nurse employed by this company, 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.

Young people are provided with a good range of purposeful and enjoyable activities. Moreover, there is always sufficient staff on duty to enable young people to pursue individual interests, including an arts and crafts course.

An on-going programme of redecoration and refurbishment is in place to ensure the home is maintained at a satisfactory standard throughout. A dedicated maintenance team also ensures any minor repairs are efficiently addressed. Young people like

their personalised bedrooms. One parent is particularly impressed that the office was relocated to enable her son to have an en-suite bedroom suitably located to meet his specific sensitivity to noise.

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 are very good. Good behaviour and effort are 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 ensure 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 young person's social worker wrote: 'He is very happy and settled at this home and his behaviour has improved so much.' Another said: 'They treat him as an individual. He responds well to the well thought out structure and routine. He is now a completely different child. He has completely calmed so the incidents have reduced and few result in restraints.'

However, restraint records do not include the details of any medical treatment administered to the child concerned as is legally required. The recording of medication is also not sufficiently robust to demonstrate safe practices at all times.

All staff receive safeguarding training as part of their induction and have recently attended a refresher course. This ensures they respond appropriately in the event of any disclosures of abuse and are fully up to date with current best practice.

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 particular: there is no documentary evidence that all the recommendations from the fire risk assessment have been satisfactorily addressed; not all staff receive timely training in fire prevention; and, not all staff are fully aware of the procedures to follow if young people refuse to leave the building during a fire drill.

Highly effective recruitment and selection processes are in place to 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. Appropriate development plans are also in place to continually improve upon the services provided. It is managed by a suitably qualified and experienced individual. Effective deputising arrangements and an on-call system are also in place.

The Statement of Purpose is regularly updated to ensure it accurately describes the current aims, practices and staffing structures in the home. The children's guide is available in a range of child-friendly formats to suit the individual needs of all the young people currently living in the home. However, they do not include the current contact details of Ofsted and the Children's Rights Director for England, who can advocate on behalf of individual children and young people.

The one recommendation made at the last inspection has been satisfactorily addressed. Consequently, the pantry ceiling has been re-plastered, the external drains cleared and the utility room repainted.

Young people are looked after by a relatively stable staff team consisting of a good gender balance and a diverse range of relevant skills and experience. High staffing ratios also ensure they can be particularly responsive to individual needs. Moreover, they have established good working relationships with other agencies to safeguard and promote the welfare of the young people who access this service. Social workers describe the staff team as, 'very dedicated and enthusiastic'.

However, a few staff have not completed all their mandatory training or completed a refresher course in a timely manner to ensure safe and consistent practices. Examples include basic first aid and food hygiene.

Staff confirm monthly team meetings with open and honest debates. The majority also feel that their views are listened to in respect of continually improving upon the service provided. They also say that the management team is approachable and accessible for on-going advice, guidance and support. However, some staff are not receiving regular formal individual supervision. As yet, this is not impacting negatively on the outcomes for young people at the home.

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. However, not all the shortfalls identified are efficiently addressed.

Moreover, Regulation 34 reports are not evaluative and do not 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. One social worker described the paperwork he receives as, 'detailed and purposeful in that it informs future practice'.

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.