

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 compounded by significant challenging behaviours, autism and complex medical conditions.

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 **adequate**.

Young people are safe and secure at this home which offers good quality care. They enjoy excellent relationships with the staff and benefit from highly personalised care which meets their unique and particularly complex needs. Consequently, they are making very good progress in all aspects of their development.

Young people demonstrate that they are happy living in this home and parents and social workers are consistently very satisfied with the quality of care provided. However, there is limited documentary evidence of frequent consultations with independent reviewing officers and other professional stakeholders.

Suitable development plans are in place to continue to improve upon the service provided. In particular, it is anticipated that the recent increase from one to two deputies will ensure at all times the minimum frequency of formal staff supervision. However, there is no documentary evidence in the home that the new deputies have at least one year's relevant supervisory experience to deputise in the manager's absence.

There is one breach of regulation arising from this inspection which is to satisfactorily maintain an admission and discharge register. This does not impact negatively on the

welfare or safety of the young people.

Six recommendations have also been made. These suggest that the current monitoring systems are not sufficiently robust to ensure at all times: a high standard of accommodation; stringent recruitment processes; and, safe and effective restraints. Also, one young person's individualised children's guide does not include the contact details of the Children's Rights Director, Ofsted and independent advocates.

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
29 (2001)	ensure a record in the form of a register includes the address of each child prior to being accommodated in this home and the statutory provision under which each child is accommodated. (Regulation 29, Schedule 4(1)(c) and (f))	31/07/2013

Recommendations

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

- ensure the views of independent reviewing officers are sought regularly on the child's care (NMS 1.4)
- ensure all areas of the home are well maintained, decorated and furnished (NMS 10.3)
- ensure the recruitment process always includes making telephone enquiries as well as obtaining references (NMS 16.1)
- demonstrate that the manager regularly monitors, in line with regulations, all records kept by the home and in particular the effectiveness of all restraints and staff recruitment files (NMS 21.2)
- revise a children's guide to include how the individual young person can contact the Children's Rights Director and Ofsted and how to secure access to an independent advocate (NMS 13.5)
- demonstrate that the persons designated to deputise for the Registered Manager in his absence have at least one year's relevant supervisory experience. (NMS 17.4)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

All the young people benefit from the security of long term, stable placements where their physical, medical and emotional needs are well met. They also enjoy regular and positive contact with their family which maintains their sense of identity and belonging.

Young people take part in a wide range of meaningful activities in the local community which they have not previously accessed. This increases their social interactions and improves their self-esteem and confidence. One young person communicated, 'I really enjoyed a train ride and I can't wait to go again.'

School attendance is excellent despite some individual histories of very limited education. Consequently and especially given their starting points, young people are making very good progress. An educational psychologist wrote, 'He is much calmer and at peace with himself. He is more alert, connecting with people and interacting with greater ease. I am very impressed with his motor skills.'

One hundred per cent of the young people living at this home do not offend, smoke, drink alcohol or take illicit drugs. All the young people enjoy general good health which has resulted for some in a reduction of medication.

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 very good outcomes. Examples include: increased patience; significantly improved challenging behaviours; appropriate eating and sleeping patterns; increased communication; and the continued development of self-care skills. Young people particularly enjoy helping with the laundry, watering the plants, cooking and baking. This is significant progress as some young people were previously not deemed safe in a kitchen, even under close supervision.

One parent wrote, 'He is doing really well with his life skills.' Comments from social workers include, 'His tolerance to things he previously had problems with, such as having hair and nails cut and accessing medical and dental services is now much improved. He will make choices at local shops and now enjoys meals out. These are huge strides forward', 'This young person can now sit at the table and wait for his meal' and, 'He loves cooking and shopping and is thriving under experiential learning.'

Quality of care

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

Young people benefit from highly individualised care in line with their up-to-date and child friendly placement plans. A key strength of this service is the excellent range of

appropriate specialist services provided in a timely manner. These support the care staff in effectively meeting all the young people's unique and highly complex physical, medical and behavioural needs. Company resources include a qualified speech and language therapist and specifically trained behaviour support workers.

The gradual and sensitive discharge and admission processes in place ensure smooth transitions for young people. Consequently they settle quickly. Established practices include staff well known and liked by young people moving with them to their new home. Moreover, the young people living together are carefully chosen to ensure compatibility and to meet specific needs, for example noise sensitivity. The bedroom for one young person, who has recently moved into this home, has been completely re-decorated and furnished to her exact wishes so it provides a safe and comfortable private space.

Young people's views, wishes and feelings are central to the day-to-day running of the home. This reinforces the fact that their opinions matter and are genuinely valued. This, in turn, increases their self-esteem and confidence.

Young people's parents are also actively involved in care planning and their views and wishes about their child's care are respected and positively acted upon. The detailed and creatively presented information for reviews also ensures they gain a real insight into their child's continued progress. Feedback from parents include, 'If there are any issues I feel able to raise them with the staff and they are very quickly resolved. The progress my son is making has given me a warm glow' and, 'I am more than happy with this service. It meets our son's needs. We have good communication. I feel listened to and I am kept well informed of his progress.'

Staff have high aspirations for all the young people and actively challenge any perceived barriers to ensure their full participation in the local community. This includes access to a good range of stimulating activities, in spite of their profound disabilities, which might not otherwise be available to them. Young people really enjoy playing with the varied range of appropriate toys provided in the large private garden. Staff are very attentive to individual needs and tolerances and frequently change the activities. This successfully ensures young people's continued concentration and enjoyment and thereby prevents anxieties.

Education is also actively promoted by the staff. Staff at the home and the teachers work together throughout the school day so there is an excellent understanding of how each young person learns. All achievements are celebrated and rewarded, which increases young people's feelings of self worth.

Social workers are very satisfied with the quality of care provided at this home but they did not all feel consulted about how the service could improve. Independent reviewing officers and other professional stakeholders are also not regularly consulted. The feedback received via Ofsted was highly complementary. Comments include, 'He is happy and well cared for in this placement and is thriving with his structured school timetable', 'He receives a high level of care. He loves his new room and enjoys lots of activities in the community. He appears very settled and there are

now very few challenging behaviours' and, 'I have always been impressed by the fact that they go the extra mile. These are extremely difficult young people to manage. There is good communication with me and they provide a really good, 24 hour holistic approach.'

A key strength identified by professionals is that staff work well with parents and actively support constructive contact arrangements in line with any legal directions and personal preferences. This includes staff transporting young people long distances and being available at short notice close by if problems arise or staying in parental homes.

Good health and well-being is actively promoted at this home. Young people and the staff particularly benefit from the expertise of a qualified nurse, employed by the company, who regularly visits the home. Consequently, she has secured a very good relationship with all the young people and has an excellent understanding of their individual health needs. The arrangements in place for the administration of first aid and medication are safe and effective. One parent complimented the staff on their professionalism when his son had a recent seizure. The paramedics said, 'The staff involved did an excellent job prior to our arrival.'

In general this service provides a homely and comfortable environment. However, some relatively minor repairs have not been addressed in a timely manner. In particular, plaster is falling off around one bathroom door and an area of the new flooring is ripped in the conservatory. The suite in the main lounge is also looking tired. Plans are in place to brighten up the relatively narrow upstairs corridor.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people are safe and secure at this home and enjoy sound, trusting relationships with the staff. This team adopts a very flexible, needs-led approach to ensure young people always feel happy and secure. Recent examples include adapting the living environment and changing morning routines.

All staff are suitably trained in positive handling, safeguarding, countering bullying and fire safety. This ensures safe and consistent practices.

Young people particularly benefit from clear structures and routines in line with individualised behaviour management plans. These are reviewed and revised as necessary every month by a multi-disciplinary team to ensure the strategies remain highly effective. An independent educational psychologist wrote, 'This young person has made great strides. He is more calm and happy. His attention span has increased and his fine motor skills have improved.' Moreover, some young people are becoming increasingly aware of their own emotions and how to manage them more appropriately. One young person will now take herself to her room to calm down. This is significant progress.

High staffing ratios 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. Accidents are also rare and no sanctions are used. There have been no complaints about this home or allegations of abuse.

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 are significantly reducing.

Placing authorities say this home provides a safe and comfortable environment. They also confirm good partnership working to safeguard and promote the welfare of all the young people living at this home. They particularly highlight that young people are helped by the staff to understand how to protect themselves.

All the required health and safety certificates are in place and internal fire checks undertaken at the required frequencies to evidence a safe and well maintained building. Personalised evacuation plans are in place for each young person and regular fire drills are undertaken at different times of the day and night. This helps to ensure that all the young people and staff know exactly what to do in the case of a real fire.

Staff recruitment files include all the required information to evidence a safe and competent workforce. Generally there is also good scrutiny of the information, for example, thoroughly exploring any gaps in employment. However, most, but not all references are verified.

Leadership and management

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

This home is always well staffed to meet the unique needs and personal preferences of all the young people. Up to very recently, this was also a very stable staff team. Six members have moved with two young people to adult provision within the company to ensure continuity of care. This now means only 50% of the team in this home have the qualification required for their respective roles.

Staff feel well supported by the suitably qualified, experienced and child focused Registered Manager; morale is high. They are all satisfied with the induction and on-going training provided, the quality of their supervisions and the timeliness of annual appraisals. New staff receive fortnightly supervision and the majority of experienced staff receive monthly supervision. Comments include, 'I love it here. The manager is very flexible with shift patterns enabling me to work full time, do my degree and voluntary work with young people in the community', 'Everybody here works together to support the young people from the top to the bottom of the staff structure and we gets lots of support' and, 'If you want to ask a question you can ask anyone on the team as they are all helpful and there has been support from the behaviour support team from day one of a new admission.'

This home has recently increased from one to two deputies. This is to specifically ensure the required frequency of supervision for all staff and to generally share the range of other managerial responsibilities. However, their personnel files in the home do not demonstrate that they have at least one year's relevant supervisory experience to deputise in the manager's absence.

This home demonstrates a satisfactory capacity for continued improvement. This is particularly based on the significant progress young people are making from their individual starting points. Staff confirm that managers listen to what ideas they have about how the service could improve, so there is a genuine sense of ownership.

The three requirements made at the last interim inspection on 4 March 2013 were satisfactorily addressed. Consequently, all young people's bedrooms are now personalised and suitably decorated and furnished. Also, children's files now include all the legally required information. However, despite concerted efforts by the Registered Manager, key documentation including pathway plans and statutory review minutes are still not routinely being forwarded by placing authorities in a timely manner.

The three recommendations made have all been positively responded to. This means there is now more effective systems in place to ensure: all new staff are working towards the Children and Young People's Workforce Diploma within six months of confirmation of employment; and, all staff complete their mandatory training and undertake any required refresher courses in a timely manner. The Statement of Purpose has also been revised to accurately reflect the current organisational structure and the aims, policies and facilities provided in this particular home and the wider company.

Established monitoring systems are in place in line with the regulations. However, they are not sufficiently robust in that shortfalls are not always identified and efficiently addressed, most notably staff files. There is also limited documentary evidence of management evaluation of restraint records to demonstrate that practice is always safe and effective.

An admission and discharge register was only introduced during this inspection, but it still does not include all the legally required information. This is a breach of regulations and further demonstrates a lack of management scrutiny, but there is no negative impact on the young people.

This service produces personalised and meaningful children's guides which meet young people's particular needs and abilities. However, the most recent version does not include how a young person can directly access an independent advocate, the Children's Rights Director and Ofsted should they wish to raise any concerns.

The young people's files are generally in good order. They provide clear, individualised and measurable targets and demonstrate the very good progress they are making in all aspects of their development.

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.