

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Jo Stephenson
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Date of last inspection	16/01/2013
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This is a privately owned children's home which provides care and accommodation for up to five children and young people, who have a learning disability.

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 home provides a supportive environment in which young people are happy. Young people enjoy extremely positive relationships with appropriately qualified staff that are able to meet the young people's individual needs. Internal care plans and risk assessments are personalised and comprehensive. Outcomes for young people are continually assessed and evaluated through reviewing the intervention strategies used to support young people. However, up-to-date statutory placement plans are not available for all young people and case files do not include all necessary documentation and records. As a result, young people do not consistently benefit from an integrated approach in meeting their care and welfare needs.

Young people benefit from the consistent application of clear boundaries to promote positive behaviour and reduce risk-taking behaviours. Staff have a sound knowledge and understanding of their responsibilities in relation to safeguarding.

Staff are experienced in interpreting the body language of young people so as to ascertain their views. The home uses symbol-based documents to record regular young people's meetings and introduce young people to the home. However, staff do not receive regular training in alternative and non-verbal communication methods. This means that young people are not consistently able to express their views on all aspects of their care, and are not encouraged to further their non-verbal communication skills.

The home is well maintained and decorated. Nonetheless, the environment does not provide young people with free access to sensory equipment or stimulation without reference to staff. Furthermore, symbols and pictures to aid communication are not

always readily available and this limits the communication abilities of some young people.

The Registered Manager monitors the quality of the service and outcomes for young people. Managers retain an overview of the progress of the home and are able to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the provision and this demonstrates a continuing capacity for the development of the home.

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
12A (2001)	cooperate with the child's placing authority in agreeing and signing the plan for the child's placement in accordance with the provisions in regulation 9 of the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulation 2010 (Regulation 12A(1))	16/03/2014
28 (2001)	maintain in respect of each child who is accommodated in a children's home a record in permanent form which includes the information, documentation and records specified in Schedule 3 relating to that child. (Regulation 28(1)(a))	16/03/2014

Recommendations

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

- ensure that all children communicate their views on all aspects of their care and support. This specifically relates to access to non-verbal communication tools (NMS 1.3)
- ensure that staff in the home are trained to recognise and deal with any indications or incidents of bullying (NMS 3.12)
- ensure that children develop their emotional, intellectual, social creative and physical skills though the accessible and stimulating environment created by the home (NMS 7.1)
- ensure that children have access to a range of educational resources to support their learning (NMS 8.2)
- ensure that staff are equipped with the skills required to meet the needs of the children and purpose of the setting. (NMS 18.1)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people receive personalised care that meets their individual needs, and they benefit from the high staffing levels in the home. Young people are provided with one-to-one support that enables them to participate in new experiences and learn new skills. Staff use basic sign language and verbal encouragement to celebrate the achievements of young people, and reward and incentive charts have been introduced for some young people. This gives them a sense of well-being and self-esteem and allows young people to interpret the progress they are making.

Staff work closely with schools and education provisions to ensure that attendance is high. Internal behaviour plans and risk assessments include intervention strategies to address disruptive behaviours in both the home and school environments. Educational achievements, goals and targets are assimilated into internal support plans and this means that young people benefit from an integrated approach to maintaining their school placements and promoting positive outcomes. Nevertheless, case files do not include up-to-date personal education plans or statements of special education needs. Furthermore, educational resources for young people to encourage continued learning are not readily accessible in the home.

Young people attend doctors', dentists' and opticians' appointments as required. Staff have established links with primary care providers who deliver bespoke care for young people with learning disabilities. As a result, young people's physical health needs are addressed by competent professionals who are able to understand and appreciate their specific requirements. Staff liaise with families and mental health specialists to identify the psychological and emotional health needs of young people. Detailed health plans run concurrent with risk assessments to address the identified vulnerabilities young people face due to their diagnosed disabilities. This means that young people benefit from a holistic approach to addressing their individual and disability specific health needs.

Staff support young people to maintain regular contact with their families. Contact arrangements, including restrictions on contact, are well-defined in case files and staff encourage families to spend time in the home as well as in the community. Parents and relatives commend the 'family atmosphere' in the home. One parent said, 'this place feels like a big, welcoming family home and my child is happy living here.'

Young people access a range of community activities, such as a local stables, in the vicinity. One young person said, 'I like helping to look after the horses and keeping them clean.' As a result, young people are involved in their community and are not isolated.

Quality of care

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

Young people enjoy good relationships with staff. Staff have a detailed knowledge of the individual needs of young people and are able to ascertain antecedents to changes in mood through the interpretation of body language. Staff complete and regularly review internal placement plans for young people. Plans describe the individual welfare and care needs of young people and are linked to risk assessments to promote positive behaviours. Young people have individual behaviour management plans in place that detail de-escalation techniques to use to maintain acceptable behaviours. However, statutory placement plans and care plans are not up to date for all young people. Subsequently, not all young people may experience an integrated approach to their care. Furthermore, the home does not retain all young people's necessary documents in case files, as required by the regulations.

Staff use symbol-format key working sessions to ascertain the young people's views, wishes and feelings. For example, young people are involved in menu planning and activity plans based on their likes and dislikes. As a result, young people are able to influence the day-to-day operation of the home. Nonetheless, young people do not have ready access to signs and symbols to enhance or practice their communication skills. This means that they are sometimes unable to converse with others without reference to staff. Furthermore, staff do not receive regular training in the use of non-verbal or alternative communication methods. As a result, young people are not effectively supported to advance their communication skills and this impacts on their quality of care.

Young people participate in regular young people's meetings. These are recorded in symbol format to allow young people to review the contents of these meetings if they wish. Staff share information with young people about proposed changes to the daily running of the home, planned activities and upcoming events. The home operates a complaints procedure which is available to young people in a range of symbol and pictorial formats. Complaints monitoring records are detailed and show that issues raised are addressed within suitable timescales.

The daily routine of the home supports young people to attend their education placements and staff provide practical assistance to ensure placements are maintained. Staff work with schools to continually review achievements and celebrate the progress young people make. This means that young people benefit from a comprehensive approach to developing their skills. However, the home environment does not provide young people with accessible communication tools to continually promote their learning. Furthermore, young people cannot access sensory stimulating equipment or toys without reference to staff and this limits their continued development.

The Registered Manager has developed partnerships arrangements with general and specialist health services. Staff promote the emotional, psychological and physical health needs of young people and encourage them to maintain a healthy life style through exercise and healthy eating. Young people who reside in the home have extremely complex health needs. Specific health requirements are detailed in internal

health plans and support programmes. Health plans include known physical and behavioural traits symptomatic to the medical conditions of young people, such as seizures or head-banging. Nevertheless, case files do not contain up to date statutory care plans for all young people and this means that the appropriateness of internal health plans cannot be verified.

The home is maintained to a good standard and is located close to essential amenities such as transport links, shopping centres and leisure facilities.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people are safe and protected from harm. The home has introduced a revised anti-bullying policy and incidents of bullying are extremely rare.

Staff receive regular training in physical intervention and de-escalation techniques and restraint is only used as a last resort to protect young people from significant harm. This includes extreme self-injurious behaviours, such as persistent and continual head banging, which is symptomatic of their medical diagnoses. Records of restraint are very detailed and behaviour plans and risk assessments for young people are updated following incidents of physical intervention.

The Registered Manager regularly reviews the health and safety risk assessment to identify known hazards in the environment. Activity specific risk assessments are completed to ensure that external environments are suitable and reflect the abilities and disabilities of young people. Fire drills and tests are completed and records detail the frequency that young people participate in these. The home has a fire risk assessment in place and this is supported by an emergency plan. As a result, young people are protected from this risk of harm.

Staff complete training in child protection and safeguarding, although this does not specifically relate to working with children with disabilities. Safeguarding is considered on a daily basis in the home. For example, managers evaluate available staffing levels when planning external activities and events. Young people receive continual verbal and basic signed praise from staff and this means they understand the behaviours expected of them. Staff record incidents of inappropriate behaviours in case files and records show these events are reported to families and social workers. Records are extremely detailed and this allows staff to identify patterns and trends in behaviours displayed. The home has safe practice and missing from home protocols in place. There have been no incidents of missing from home.

The home adheres to organisational recruitment procedures in place to safeguard young people. Safety checks are carried out in full on all new starters. This means that young people work with suitably vetted and selected staff.

Leadership and management

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

The home has an experienced and permanent Registered Manager. The requirements and recommendations raised at the last inspection have been addressed. Staff have completed mandatory training that supports their role. However, specific training to reflect the individual needs of young people, such as training in non-verbal and alternative communication skills, has not been regularly provided. As a result, not all staff are competent in this area and able to communicate effectively with young people. Staff attend regular team meetings and say these are supportive and productive to the development of the home. The manager ensures that staff receive regular formal supervision that scrutinises their practice and performance. Consequently, the home demonstrates a capacity to continue to improve. The Registered Manager ensures that the home is well resourced and structured to support stability and consistency for young people.

Young people, families and the placing authorities are clear about the support the home provides, and the home meets the aims and objectives detailed in the Statement of Purpose. Families speak positively of the home. One parent said, 'the home is wonderful, so caring and supportive and I am always kept up to date.' The manager is committed to improving outcomes for young people. Staff have an extensive range of skills and are proficient at identifying the care requirements of young people. As a result, young people work with staff who understand their specific needs.

Monitoring tools are in place to consider the quality of care and outcomes for young people and the manager is able to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the home. Nonetheless, not all shortfalls identified by the manager are addressed in a timely manner. For example, case files do not consistently include all information as required by the regulations, and the need for these documents is not effectively challenged with the placing authority. This means that the quality of care for young people may be compromised.

The Registered Manager operates a central system to record incidents and significant events and actions taken. Systems are robust and identify patterns and trends to young people's behaviours, and these are cross references to internal assessment documents.

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.