

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Sharon Lewis
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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.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcome for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and relevant National Minimum Standards for the establishment.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding:	this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality
Good:	this aspect of the provision is strong
Satisfactory:	this aspect of the provision is sound
Inadequate:	this aspect of the provision is not good enough

Service information

Brief description of the service

The home was initially registered on 19 January 2006. The home currently provides accommodation and care to young people of both genders aged between 12 and 18 years old with learning disabilities. This includes providing a service for young people on the autistic spectrum. The home is registered for up to a maximum of six young people.

The home is spread across two floors, with young people's bedrooms located on the first floor. The bedrooms are well furnished and individually decorated. Young people have access to two lounges, a sensory room, a timeout room and an activity room. There is a garden with a patio area and a large trampoline. The home is situated within walking distance of local shops and is served well by transport networks.

At the time of this inspection, one young person was enjoying a respite break. Due to the nature of their disability they were unable to verbalise their satisfaction with the home. They did, however, indicate that they were happy. They appeared extremely comfortable and relaxed. They were also observed to have built up a very strong bond with staff.

Summary

At this unannounced inspection all key standards were inspected. Young people benefit from a good service with outstanding features. The home demonstrates great commitment in meeting young people's needs and enhancing their lives. Staff focus on young people's strengths and succeed in helping them maximise their potential. Young people continue to exceed expectations in relation to their independent living and social skills. Staff work creatively with young people to enable them to exercise their choice. At the heart of the service is respect for the individual and their best interests.

The only shortfall related to renewing the electrical installation certificate. This was promptly responded to. To further improve practice a recommendation is also being made. This relates to providing further specialist autism training for staff.

The overall quality rating is good.

This is an overview of what the inspector found during the inspection.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the home was required to address one action. This related to the need to appoint and submit an application form for a suitable manager. The responsible individual has been undertaking this role. They are currently undergoing registration for the manager post. This will provide good continuity of care for the service. The home was also asked to consider one recommendation, to further improve practice. This related to obtaining written parental permission to administer first aid and appropriate non-prescription medication. All young people within the home have this information. This enables the home to effectively respond in emergency situations or when a young person is unwell.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people benefit from the home's proactive approach to healthcare. The home has excellent food hygiene practices. This was confirmed during their recent environmental health inspection. During respite visits staff work hard to promote a healthy diet and cater for individual preferences. Young people receive encouragement to make better nutritional choices. Staff creatively incorporate fruit and vegetables during mealtimes. Young people are also able to help themselves to fresh fruit. The home seeks to provide a more professional response and are currently liaising with a dietician.

Pictorial aids assist young people with devising their own menus. The pictorial menu board also informs young people of the meals for the day. Young people enjoy eating a range of international cuisine. Young people accompany staff grocery shopping. They are also able to prepare light snacks or assist during mealtimes with staff supervision. Mealtimes are a social occasion. The home has a brightly decorated dining room, where young people and staff can eat together. As a special treat young people are also able to eat out at their favourite fast food restaurant.

The home works closely with other health professionals to promote good health outcomes. Personal health plans comprehensively detail the young person's current and potential health needs. As young people are also experiencing adolescence, plans also sensitively manage their sexual behaviour. Staff can accompany young people to their health appointments. A valuable resource to support these visits is the pictorial health guide book. Staff regularly monitor health, fluid intake and portion sizes. Exercise is part of young people's daily activities; this can include going for walks, swimming or trampolining.

Medical arrangements focus on the welfare of young people. The staff member with lead responsibility for medication issues has a nursing qualification. This provides a good clinical approach to practice. First aid and refresher training is in progress. There is now greater accountability. The home has parental consent to administer medication, emergency treatment and first aid to all young people, which enables the staff to effectively respond in emergency situations or when a young person is unwell. Staff securely store all medication in a purpose-built cabinet and maintain medication administration records.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The home provides a safe, nurturing environment for young people. Staff value the uniqueness of each young person, respecting their dignity, privacy and rights. Staff confidentially manage and securely store all personal information. The home has appropriate policies and procedures, which focus on promoting the safety of young people. The home provides a quality service and there have been no complaints since the last inspection. The home receives updates on good practice from the Local Safeguarding Children Board. Staff additionally receive regular training, which focuses on safe care and protecting young people. The home proactively monitors the welfare of young people. This involves regularly raising concerns with placing authorities.

Young people benefit from care which is focused, consistent and which reinforces positive behaviour. The high staff ratio means young people have at least one member of staff caring for them at all times. Staff have a good understanding of individual needs and triggers. Staff engage young people in a variety of activities, which stimulate them and diffuse distress. The home does not have a problem with bullying or young people being absent without authority. There has been marked improvements in young people's behaviour. Young people respond well

to the reward system, which acknowledges their good behaviour and achievements. Staff have not had to restrain young people. Young people enjoy spending time at the home. They thrive with a stable and empowering atmosphere.

Young people reside in a home which is both physically safe and secure. Staff undertake regular health and safety checks. This includes checking the building, fire alarm, fridge, freezer and water temperatures. Young people participate in fire drills and swiftly evacuate the premises. Staff produce and review risk assessments. These effectively highlight hazards which relate to individual young people, activities and the building. The organisation has contracts with specialist professionals, who confirm the safety of the gas supply, fire equipment, electrical appliances and wiring. Due to a communication error, the latter was outstanding. An appointment was immediately arranged. The managerial response focused on limiting any impact on young people.

The organisation has a good recruitment procedure. The organisation appropriately recruits new staff. New staff have social care experience and their skills and abilities enhance the staff team. Young people receive support from a generally stable staff team. In the event of emergencies, there is good continuity of care from a small group of bank staff. The home appropriately maintains a record of all visitors. Staffing levels ensure that visitors do not have unsupervised access to young people.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Young people receive excellent support, which maximises their potential. A key strength of the home is their contribution to young people's development and fulfilment. Young people are making vast improvements with their behaviour, social and independent living skills. The levels of achievement surpass expectations. The organisation demonstrates a strong commitment to young people. An example is developing a new service for young people as they make the transition into adulthood. The implementation of a domiciliary care service enables young people to live independently in the community.

The high staffing ratio and focused, individualised support enable young people to thrive. Young people who previously displayed challenging behaviour are now able to calmly engage with staff. Young people with limited communication skills are now able to express their choices using a range of aids. With staff support young people are able to self-care and undertake household tasks.

Young people benefit from the home's consistent approach to care. The introduction of person-centred planning clarifies young people's individual support needs. Each young person has their own book which includes their preferences, choices, strengths and abilities. Person-centred plans effectively highlight young people's aspirations. Their key worker then takes responsibility for helping them achieve their goals. Staff work in partnership with parents and involved professionals to promote the best interests of young people.

The home believes in the empowering aspects of education. Staff value the uniqueness of each young person and their ability to learn. The home has their own life-skills programme. Staff creatively assist young people with improving their literacy, numeracy and daily living skills. The introduction of art classes gives young people a further opportunity for self-expression. Staff liaise closely with schools, which promotes good continuity of care.

Young people have the opportunity to engage in life-enhancing activities. Throughout the home are photographs of young people engaged in varied activities. This includes exploring their local area and sightseeing within London, trips to the seaside and amusement parks. Young people benefit from the home having their own van, which enables them to explore the wider community. Young people are able to celebrate their birthdays at the home. They enjoy having a party with food, decorations and their own cake. The home currently offers a respite service. They exceed their levels of responsibility regarding clothing. For example, if young people do not bring suitable attire with them, staff purchase items for them.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Young people are at the heart of care planning. The assessment and care planning process follows a person-centred approach. Plans comprehensively detail the holistic needs of young people. The home requests care plans from placing authorities. On occasions when this information is not available, staff proactively produce their own plans. Person-centred books detail capabilities and support needs, from the young person's perspective. Books also contain a personal profile, action plan and their list of desired outcomes.

The home has a good system of reviewing young people's plans. This information is available for placing authorities through weekly progress reports. Staff regularly monitor, evaluate and make appropriate changes to care plan arrangements. Staff attend and make a positive contribution at young people's statutory reviews. Staff prepare review reports. These reports highlight the effectiveness of the home's intervention. They also have an impact on future decision making.

The home is able to offer long-term care; however, current young people only require respite breaks. Parents maintain parental responsibility, therefore contact is not an issue. The home works flexibly to meet the needs of parents and placing authorities. Staff work hard at building strong working relationships with parents. Staff expect parents to work with them in helping young people achieve their goals. Parents receive up-to-date written feedback after each visit. This reassures parents that the home is promoting the best interests of their child.

Clear procedures ensure young people move into and out of the home in a sensitive manner. Usually admissions are planned; this consists of gradual introductions. The home is, however, able to manage emergency placements. When young people leave the service to move to another care setting, staff hold a leaving party. Young people enjoy this celebration and appreciate the gifts and good wishes for the future.

Young people play a key role in the home's decision making. Regular consultation meetings enable young people to contribute towards menu and activity planning. Throughout the day young people are able to express their opinions. Staff use a range of methods to obtain young people's viewpoints, for example by using pictorial aids, communication methods and non-verbal observations.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Young people continue to exceed expectations in relation to their independent living skills. The home has their own life-skills programme which focuses on the skills needed for adulthood.

Each young person has an individual programme which builds on their capabilities. Staff set realistic aims that are not limited by a young person's presenting disability. Young people work on their numeracy, literacy, communication, daily living tasks and social skills.

Young people learn to develop inner qualities; these include self-respect, self-reliance and the ability to make informed decisions. Throughout the home are pictorial symbols which remind young people of self-care and day-to-day tasks. With staff assistance or prompting, young people are able to attend to their personal hygiene. Young people can make snacks, assist with cooking, and set and clear the table at mealtimes. They are also able to take items to the laundry.

Young people reside in a modern, clean and comfortable home. In close proximity are a range of shops, amenities, places of worship and leisure facilities. There are also good rail and road links. The home has a welcoming atmosphere. Vibrant murals provide good visual stimulation for young people. On display are numerous photographs of young people engaging in different activities. These remind young people of their fun memories. Pictorial symbols additionally assist with orientation and communication.

The home is spacious, with a choice of communal areas. The main lounge has modern furnishings; here young people can watch television or DVDs. A second lounge is also available, where young people can find their personal play boxes. The activity room has a good range of toys and games. These include a sand pit and a structure designed for small ball play. Young people are also able to relax in the quiet room or the sensory room.

Young people have a choice of two bathrooms with shower facilities. There is a dedicated dining room for them to eat their meals. Young people can also use the laundry room and kitchen with staff supervision. Young people enjoy spending time in the garden. They can relax on the garden furniture or exercise on the large trampoline. There are plans to make the garden more suitable for young people's needs. This involves levelling the ground, building a play barn and a sandpit, and providing a padded surface and a new lawn.

Young people wishing to stay at the home would need to be able to climb stairs. All of the uniquely decorated single rooms are upstairs. As the home currently caters for a small group of young people, they are able to personalise rooms to reflect their individual interests. During their respite breaks young people stay in their own allocated room.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The home regularly updates the documentation they produce for young people, their parents and placing authorities. The updated Statement of Purpose clearly summarises the home's objectives, philosophy and care practices. The home succeeds in meeting the varying needs of young people. Young people receive support from a competent, experienced, gender-balanced staff team. Several staff members hold professional qualifications; these include nursing and social work. The organisation utilises staff members' strengths by allocating individual areas of responsibility.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Staff focus on young people's capabilities and not perceived limitations linked to their disability. The Statement of Purpose and other documentation promote anti-discriminatory practice and the principles of normalisation and

social inclusion. Person-centred care planning addresses religion, identity, sexuality and cultural needs. On display throughout the home is imagery which represents different races. Young people enjoy an international diet and receive care from a culturally diverse staff team. This helps with their appreciation of other cultures.

Young people benefit from the high staffing ratio. This enables young people to have one-to-one, or at times two-to-one, care. The staff team work well together. They enjoy working at the home and are able to use their initiative to improve practice. The staff team's positive morale contributes to good care outcomes for young people. There is recognition that staff need ongoing training to equip them for their role. The home has a training and development plan. The home is working towards all staff achieving the National Vocational Qualification at level 3. Staff effectively meet young people's needs; they are, however, still awaiting further training in autism.

The home has a development plan, which is driven by wishing to meet the changing needs of young people. The introduction of a home administrator is a positive contribution to the staff team. The responsible individual is still covering the vacant manager position and is currently applying to register as the manager. This will provide good continuity of care for young people. This person has relevant experience and demonstrates good leadership skills.

Young people benefit from the home's quality assurance system. Every month a manager from another home visits the home unannounced. They examine all areas required by regulations. They also make recommendations to further improve the service. The home has produced a feedback questionnaire for parents; they also plan on collating all compliments. Staff appropriately maintain young people's personal information and records clearly detail their progress, highlight their uniqueness, their strengths and areas of development.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions, which must be taken so that the registered person meets the Care Standards Act 2000, The Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

Standard	Action	Due date
26	ensure that unnecessary risks to the health and safety of children are identified and as far as possible eliminated. This relates to ensuring that periodic electrical installation inspections are undertaken. (Regulation 23 (c))	1 July 2010

Recommendations

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

- provide staff with training that equips them with the skills required to meet the needs of children with autism. (NMS 31.1)