

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	23/10/2013
Inspector	Jackie Graves
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Date of last inspection	08/01/2013
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This privately run home provides accommodation and care for up to six young people with learning disabilities. The service provides both long term and short break placements.

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**.

A strength of this home is the stable staff and management team who have worked at the home for a number of years so have known the young people as they have grown and developed over a period of time. There are warm and affectionate relationships between staff and young people. Parents say their children are happy to stay for their short break, that the staff and management team are very supportive of them and their child and communicate effectively with them. One parent said, 'They're a really good team.'

Commissioners are pleased with the outcomes young people achieve and they 'value the service'. In surveys, social workers and independent reviewing officers say the services provided by the home are good, that staff work well with them and know how to protect young people, the home provides a safe, comfortable environment for the young people to live in, and that young people access the health care they need.

Staff know the importance of young people's routines and needs. They manage behaviour proactively as they are aware of triggers which may cause the young people anxiety or upset and thus anticipate and avoid unsettled behaviour. Really effective communication helps improve young people's understanding, for example, of everyday activities and of significant plans about their lives.

Excellent help is given to those young people moving on to adult provision; this assists them to gain an understanding of what to expect and reduces anxiety about their move. Guidance, including pictures and photographs of their new home, with frequent visits, helps them prepare in a way which suits their needs. Where young

people move on to the provider's adult provision, they have been fully supported by their key worker moving with them, so experience significant continuity during this transition.

Staff are protective of the young people in their care. They ensure they can get out and about safely and are mindful of their right to be included in activities within the local community. Young people experience an active lifestyle with plenty of trips to places of interest.

On-going refurbishment has resulted in improvements to young people's experience of the building. A bathroom, lounges and the dining area are now furnished and decorated suitably for the needs of autistic young people. A bathroom has been upgraded and a new decked area provides a good outdoor space for young people to use.

Some shortfalls are found in reports of how the home is monitored, where restraints are recorded, how supervision records are finalised and obtaining further checks of references supplied for staff. However, no shortfalls currently impact negatively on the welfare and safety of young people.

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
17B (2001)	ensure that within 24 hours of the use of any measure of control, restraint or discipline in a children's home, a written record is made in a volume kept for the purpose (Regulation 17B (3))	30/11/2013
33 (2001)	evidence that the person carrying out the visit has interviewed parents, relatives and persons working at the home as appears necessary in order to form an opinion of the standard of care provided in the home. (Regulation 33 (4) (a))	30/11/2013

Recommendations

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

- ensure that records of staff supervision are signed by the supervisor and the member of staff at the end of the supervision (NMS 19.5)

- ensure that reports under Regulation 34 are completed at six monthly intervals and a copy of every report should be sent to HMCI within twenty eight days of completion (Volume 5, statutory guidance, paragraph 3.14)
- ensure that references include, where possible, a statement from each referee as to their opinion of the person's suitability to work with children (NMS 16.3 (d))
- make sure that telephone enquiries are made as well as obtaining written references. (NMS 16.1)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people's communication skills improve; for example, through the use of signing and aids such as PECS, they are increasingly able to express what they need, or understand what staff are telling them. They are supported to give their views, irrespective of how they communicate, for example, by indicating their feelings in pictures following any incident where low level restraint has been used by staff to keep young people safe. Staff find that over time some young people become more open and increasingly interact with them.

Young people attend their schools regularly so they can make the most of their educational opportunities. Some benefit from sharing their time in the home with other young people they are familiar with from school. Those who are not in school make good progress on their life skills programme. Some young people have learned to perform useful household chores, for example, vacuuming, sorting laundry and preparing drinks and snacks, gaining confidence in the process. Parents are pleased that their children then use these skills at home. Some social workers and independent reviewing officers say children's social and emotional development is improved by the care they receive, as well as their learning.

Participation in activities is good. Young people enjoy activities which suit their individual needs, for example, playing and watching ball games in local parks or using the home's trampoline. Young people live active lifestyles which helps improve their health and behaviour. Some take part in activities which are not usually readily available to them, including bowling, swimming and trips to places of interest such as Kew Gardens. Some parents feel their children's experience would be enhanced by more frequent involvement in such activities. Young people participate in growing, harvesting and eating vegetables from the garden as well as learning valuable life skills through this experience.

Young people feel reassured by following their routines during their short break or while living in the home. Their privacy is respected, for example, when they choose to go to their bedrooms as they want some quiet time alone. A parent says their child's needs are 'met very well' in the home. Another says their child is, 'Much calmer as a result of the routine with the home and their own home.'

Those young people living in the home experience appropriate contact with their

families. They are well prepared for visits from family members, for example, by looking at photographs of them and pictorial communication books, with the outcome that their behaviour is calm and they enjoy spending time with their families.

Young people attend all their routine health appointments so their general health is maintained, for example, dental checks and annual medicals. They also access specialist health services when needed to ensure their good health is encouraged. Some improve specific aspects of their health during their time in the home, for example, reaching a healthier weight due to improved eating habits and increased exercise.

Some parents find their children are more accepting of small changes to their lives and routines as a result of staying in the home. Young people try new activities and then are keen to participate in them again, whereas previously they may have found trying new activities unsettling to their established routines. Staff say that some young people have become more adventurous in what they will eat, successfully changing some of their eating habits by trying a wider range of foods and healthier options.

Quality of care

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

Staff are really concerned with young people's welfare and want them to enjoy their time in the home. Staff know the young people very well which helps them feel secure during their stay. One staff member said of the young people, 'I know them like my own children.' Young people experience warm and affectionate relationships with staff who have their welfare at heart. A social worker said, 'This young person has positive relationships with staff.' There is a relaxed and happy atmosphere in the home.

A commissioner said the staff and management are 'excellent at communicating' and that lots of compliments from social workers about the home's quality of care are received. Parents say staff 'keep them informed'. Effective communication between staff and parents ensure all are aware of any changes in young people's mood or behaviour and how these may be best managed. Staff have suitable skills to communicate effectively with young people, taking care to include verbal communication where this is understood if not used by young people, so optimising their opportunities to integrate with others in society.

Behaviour management is a strength in the home. Staff manage young people's behaviour very well. Only low level restraint is used when appropriate to keep young people safe, for example, by holding their arms if they are trying to harm themselves. Details of such restraints are recorded. However, not all information is included in the volume kept for the purpose, but on some loose-leaf records; this does not provide a permanent, tamper-proof record.

Young people's needs relating to their personal identity and cultural backgrounds are well understood and catered for. The diverse staff team effectively support young people's individual needs, for example, in making sure menus reflect their ethnic or religious backgrounds or by observing religious and cultural festivals. There is sensitive support for young people's emerging sexuality.

Although parents and social workers have not made any complaints to the home, they are confident in the home's ability to deal with any concerns. Young people are provided with the home's complaints procedure in appropriate formats, although most would be reliant on adults to make a complaint on their behalf.

Bedrooms are suitable for young people's needs regarding sufficient space, furniture or equipment. The décor in bedrooms and hallways, the stair and hallway carpet and the first floor bathroom are of poorer quality compared to the refurbished facilities on the ground floor. Also, some aspects could be viewed as childish considering the age of young people currently being cared for, for example, duvet covers with cartoons and a wall mural of Thomas the Tank Engine. However, the home has identified that further refurbishment is required through its development plan, with work planned to upgrade the rest of the building in the new year.

Arrangements for managing young people's medication are safe and effective with no reported errors during the period since the last inspection. A parent says the staff 'manage medication well'. Medication is closely monitored for any effects it may have on young people's wellbeing or behaviour so these can be reported to medical professionals for review. Arrangements for emergency treatment and first aid are sound; as a result, young people get the help and treatment they need, for example, following minor injuries.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

The home is effective at keeping young people safe. A parent states they 'Feel confident in the people looking after my child.' A commissioner says the staff 'keep young people safe'. No young people have engaged in risk taking behaviour. Any risks to young people's safety are clearly identified and assessed in their plans so staff know what steps to take to keep them safe, for example, regarding self-harming behaviour. A parent whose child had used the service said, 'They were kept safe - they were used to the safe environment - safety was never an issue. There were a few occasions when they became agitated but staff managed these well and his safety was never a problem.'

Young people are kept safe in the home and when out in the community. Due to their disabilities, most young people lack awareness of potential dangers. This is managed by close supervision and high staffing levels when on trips out. Measures are also taken, with the agreement of parents and placing authorities, to restrict young people's access to and from the front door without staff assistance. As a result, no young people have gone missing from the home during the period since

the last inspection.

The home has an effective recruitment system which checks that people are suitable before they are employed in the home and this system meets all regulations. This includes obtaining police checks and two references for each employee. However, some additional checks are not included by asking referees for a statement as to their opinion of the person's suitability to work with children, or making telephone enquiries as well as obtaining written references.

Staff are suitably trained in how to protect young people. No allegation or investigation of a child protection nature are reported during the period since the last inspection. However, staff remain vigilant for signs of abuse and know how to respond appropriately to any suspicions of harm or allegations. This ensures young people are protected by the competence and vigilance of staff.

Leadership and management

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

There is a change of management, with a new manager who has long-term experience in the home, registered at the time of the inspection, providing continuity for young people and the staff team. A commissioner states, 'Very good management - they deliver.'

The staff team receive good support to help them in their work with young people, for example, through regular team meetings, supervision and appraisal. Records of supervision are kept but not all are signed and dated to provide a fully accurate record of these discussions. A staff member says they feel 'very supported' and that management are good at 'giving them ideas and suggestions'. Staff find that management are readily available at all times to make sure the home runs smoothly for young people, who are central to what goes on.

Young people benefit from being cared for by a staff team who are well trained to meet their needs. All permanent staff have attained the appropriate vocational qualification and four of the home's own agency staff are working towards achieving this. In addition to basic training, for example in safeguarding young people and first aid, staff undertake specialist training to meet more individual needs, for example in autism and Makaton. This, and consultation with specialist resources such as the Autism Society, helps ensure that staff are knowledgeable about autism. Refurbishment of the building also takes into account young people's individual needs, such as for a calm, uncluttered environment.

Information on what the home provides is included in a clear, reviewed Statement of Purpose. A young person's guide is suitably adapted to meet differing communication needs to help young people understand what they can expect from their time in the home.

The home is safely maintained. Regular checks of systems and equipment, with

regular fire drills, help ensure a safe home for young people to live in.

Monitoring of the home is satisfactory. Although the manager checks what is going on in the home, including records of restraint, they have not compiled a report of their review of the service within the recommended six monthly timescale, so the regulator is not kept informed. Also, the provider adequately monitors what goes on in the home, but sometimes it is not apparent if they have sought and incorporated the views of those using and working for the service to gain a fully comprehensive view.

The home has responded well to the findings of the last inspection, meeting the two requirements and three recommendations made. This demonstrates the home's capacity to improve.

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.