

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC066120
Inspection date	01/06/2012
Inspector	David Martin
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	23/01/2012
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This home is operated by a local authority and registered to provide care and accommodation for up to five children of either sex. Children and young people who use the home have special educational needs, physical disabilities and associated emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Care is organised on a shared basis with young people staying in the children's home for part of the week and then going home to live with their families. When at home with their families other young people stay at the children's home. Ten families and young people are supported in this way with a maximum of five young people staying in the children's home at any one time.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: a service that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

Good: a service 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**.

This setting provides a nurturing environment in which young people have the time and space to develop as individuals. Young people accessing this service have their health care needs met well. They are supported to eat well and are involved in a wide range of physical activities. All young people have excellent school attendance and are achieving in line with their abilities. The young people have a limited capacity to understand how to keep themselves safe but there are measures in place that enable staff to protect them from harm. Many of the young people have communication difficulties. However, the staff are skilled and experienced in using a variety of techniques to ensure that they participate in decision making and can make choices. Young people enjoy strong relationships with staff and respond well to a consistent approach to challenging behaviour without the use of sanctions or physical intervention.

The home's manager has made an application to register and this is being processed. The manager provides good leadership and support to the staff team. There is a challenging but achievable improvement plan in place which is clearly designed to enhance the quality of service. The home has implemented the recommendations and requirements of previous inspections. There were no breaches of regulation

identified during this inspection and four recommendations are made concerning staff learning and development, and safeguarding measures.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure that safeguarding training for all staff specifically addresses the needs of young people with learning disabilities (NMS 4.6)
- actively promote the welfare of young people, specifically by using body maps to record action that has been taken when an injury has been observed and to evaluate the data (NMS 4.2)
- provide staff with opportunities to keep up-to-date with professional, legal and developments in care practices specifically for young people with learning disabilities (NMS 18.1)
- submit Regulation 34 reports to Ofsted every six months as a matter of good practice. (Volume 5, statutory guidance, paragraph, 3.14)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people have a limited capacity to understand their own personal development. Through intensive interaction with staff, however, they are enabled to form strong relationships with adults and other young people. The relaxed atmosphere in the home provides them with emotional stability and enables them to develop confidence in themselves and their surroundings.

Young people enjoy good health and are cared for in line with their health care plans. The responsibility for ensuring that young people's health care needs are met is shared by parents and the home. Young people have access to primary health care and more specialist provision such as child and adolescent mental health, nursing and paediatric services. The range of services available ensures that each young person's health care needs are met consistently.

Young people's individual food preferences are catered for. While some young people choose from a limited variety the staff actively encourage them to try different things and, as far as possible, provide them with well-balanced meals. Young people lead active lives and all participate in well-organised physical activities within the local community. Each young person has an excellent photographic record of the things they have done which contributes to their life story.

All young people have high school attendance and are achieving in line with their

potential. Personal education plans are available for all young people, ensuring that their educational needs are met in an agreed measurable way. The staff are actively engaged with young people's schools and liaise effectively to ensure that relevant information is shared promptly. The home's approach ensures that young people enjoy school.

The home has made good progress in developing ways to promote the involvement and contribution of young people to the day-to-day decision making in the home. Young people are enabled to have their say through individual key worker sessions and collectively in house meetings. The home effectively employs a range of aids to communication to ensure that young people's views and wishes are correctly understood. This ensures that young people's views are known and acted upon.

All young people are looked after on a shared care basis and have regular periods at home with their families.

The home has made progress in developing ways to help prepare young people to make the transition to adulthood. Facilities are being installed to allow them to participate in the preparation of drinks and snacks. This will contribute to their learning and promote some independence skills. Young people are encouraged to be self-caring in line with their abilities which enhances their self-esteem.

Quality of care

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

Young people have positive relationships with staff. The benefits of this have been observed by visitors to the home and one social worker commented that the young person he visits has, 'come on leaps and bounds and responds well to intensive interaction'. Young people are successfully encouraged to form friendships with each other and have formed strong bonds with young people from two sister homes through joint activities. This is a good development that helps young people to learn how to interact positively with others.

The home has introduced measures to promote the participation of young people in decision making in the home. They are actively encouraged to make choices about meals they would like and the daily activities. They benefit from regular art therapy and one young person has designed and created murals in the home with staff support. The home has identified its approach to participation as an area for further development.

There is a complaints procedure set out in the Statement of Purpose and the children's guide has been revised to include a pictorial guide to assist young people in sharing their views or raise concerns. There have been no complaints since the last inspection but the home has received a number of compliments. The measures in place ensure that young people or advocates acting on their behalf can make a complaint.

Each young person has an individually prepared care plan which sets out their health and education needs, daily routines and the management of risk taking behaviour. The staff are expected to be familiar with all revisions and to ensure that care is provided in line with the agreed plan. As noted above the home has strong relationships with health and educational providers which plays a significant part in supporting young people in these areas of the lives.

Concise weekly and monthly summaries provide a good running log of events and enable staff to identify areas of progress. One parent confirmed that they were aware of the care plan and were more than satisfied that it was being implemented. Sharing this information ensures that the home is accountable for the care it provides.

The premises are well maintained, have been decorated by staff and provided with some new furniture. Health and safety checks are carried out regularly, ensuring that the home is safe place for young people. There is a wide range of play equipment which ensures that young people have enjoyable activities and experiences both inside and outdoors.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people have little sense of their own safety and are reliant upon the adults to keep them safe. Staff are able to achieve this effectively through high levels of supervision, support and guidance. Young people's parents are more than satisfied that they are looked after safely. Young people said that they enjoy staying in the home.

As a result of close staff involvement young people never go missing from the home. This helps to keep them safe. Staff have a good understanding of child protection and safeguarding procedures and are confident about reporting any concerns. They have undertaken safeguarding training but it did not specifically address the safeguarding needs of young people with learning disabilities and severely limited communication and comprehension. This does not fully protect vulnerable young people.

The home is using body maps to record the observation of injuries and other marks that young people have acquired. While this is good practice, it is not always clear what follow up action has been taken when the cause is unknown. Similarly, the records are not being evaluated to identify emerging patterns or trends. The staff are not making the best use of this process to protect young people from harm.

The staff have had training in managing challenging behaviour which was specifically aimed at meeting the needs of young people with special needs. The staff found the training very helpful in modifying their practice and employing different techniques in effectively supporting young people to develop positive behaviour. The staff are confident in their ability to redirect young people and have not had to use physical

intervention for a considerable period of time.

In line with a recommendation made at the last inspection the home has removed internal door locks. This contributes to the overall well-being of young people and ensures that they have free access to the main areas of the home.

All staff are subject to robust vetting prior to commencing employment and on-going checks are made at regular intervals. This ensures that they are suitable to work with young people.

Leadership and management

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

The home has a permanent, full-time manager. She is appropriately qualified and has extensive experience of working with young people with disabilities. She has made an application to be registered and this is being processed. Staff feel that they are being well lead and supported in their efforts to provide young people with a good standard of care. The manager has high expectations of the staff team and is strongly motivated to help them develop individually and collectively. Young people benefit from the well organised leadership of the home.

The home has taken action to respond to the recommendations made at the last inspection. The home has a well-developed service improvement plan in which the manager and staff have identified further areas for improvement and set challenging but achievable targets. Additional monitoring of the home is undertaken through Regulation 33 visits and assessment of the home through the compilation of Regulation 34 reports. Both processes contribute to the on-going improvement in the quality of service provided. Currently, Regulation 34 reports are not submitted to Ofsted which does not fully allow the regulation authority to monitor activity in the home.

There are sufficient qualified and experienced staff to enable close and intensive support and supervision of young people. The staff have good access to training and all have completed mandatory courses. They are regularly supervised by the home's senior team and this enables them to reflect on their practice and consider personal development issues. While many of the staff are experienced members of the team they have few opportunities to build on their professional knowledge and to keep up-to-date with good practice developments in the provision of social care for young people with learning disabilities. This does not contribute to the enhancement of their skills as practitioners.

All records are maintained securely which ensures that information about young people is safe and confidential.

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.