

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Ann-Marie Born
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This privately owned children's home is registered to provide care, accommodation and education for up to 26 boys and girls aged from 8 years up to 17 years old. The home offers a specialised service to children and young people with autism.

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 **good**.

Young people are happy with their care, enjoy positive relationships with staff and each other and are treated with warmth, dignity and respect. School attendance and preparation for adulthood are excellent.

Young people enjoy a range of meaningful activities which provide them with new life experiences. Young people are an accepted part of their community and enjoy participating in local events. An enthusiastic staff team provides good, consistent, dedicated care and the management of the home is stable and proactive. Parents and social workers report very positively about the quality of care and experiences for young people. Young people are safe and staff are knowledgeable about and implement good safeguarding practices. Individual placement planning is good and young people's needs are met.

The Registered Manager understands the strengths and areas for further development within the home. There are some areas to improve. These include young people being afforded more opportunities to record their views and to seek medical attention following any episode of restraint. In addition, the children's guide is missing important information to promote children's rights. The bathrooms and a bedroom are in need of upgrading.

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
31 (2001)	ensure that all parts of the home used by children, particularly the bathrooms and bedrooms, are equipped with what is reasonably necessary, and adapted as necessary, in order to meet the needs arising from his disability, of any disabled child accommodated in the home so as to enable him to live as normal a life as possible. (Regulation 31 (2) (c)).	20/07/2012

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 and their wishes and feelings are acted upon in the day to day running of the home and on the care they receive, unless this is contrary to their interests (NMS 1.1 and 1.3)
- ensure that where there has been any physical restraint the home is able to call on medical assistance as required, children are always given the opportunity to be examined by a registered nurse or medical practitioner and children are encouraged to have their views recorded in the records kept by the home (NMS 3.16 and 3.18)
- ensure that the children's guide sets out how they can contact independent advocates, the Children's Rights Director and their Independent Reviewing Officer if they so wish. (NMS 13.5).

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people are happy, treated with dignity and respect and relate extremely well to staff. Each young person is cared for and respected as an individual with their own personality and unique traits. All cultural, gender and religious needs are identified and provided for. As a result, young people make good progress in developing a positive self view and forming and sustaining attachments. Staff continually engage with young people. Any achievement is recognised and celebrated, thereby promoting self-esteem and positive feelings of worth and well-being. A staff member stated: 'we work together through the bad times to get to the good.'

Key-work sessions are used effectively with young people to capture their wishes and feelings on their individual care; for example, choosing holiday activities and furniture and decoration for their bedrooms. However, no group meetings are held and young people are not being offered opportunities to share their views with their peers on the care they would like to receive. This inhibits their ability actively to participate in day-to-day decisions about their care and develop further social skills.

Young people's health needs are well met. They have access to the services they need to ensure they experience a good quality of life, including in-house clinical psychology, language and development practitioners. Staff are trained to meet the specific needs of the young people in their care.

Young people enjoy a healthy well-balanced diet eating together in their flats and attending the on-site 'bistro'. They also participate in regular physical activities, such as walking and utilising the sports facilities within the home. Parents, social workers and staff report on marked improvements in young people's self esteem and development, promoting positive well-being. These include significant healthy weight loss, becoming toilet-trained and managing aggressive behaviours. Each young person's health needs are regularly reviewed by their key worker and at placement reviews.

All young people benefit from full attendance at the on-site school, thereby promoting positive educational outcomes. Excellent daily communication is maintained between school and education staff, allowing for any concerns or achievements to be shared further promoting young people's well-being and attainments. Shared aspirations and targets for young people ensure a holistic approach to developing social and life skills and educational ability.

Young people are effectively prepared for a successful transition to adult life. They are supported to develop necessary life skills such as personal care, choosing the clothes they want to wear and helping to tidy shared spaces and their bedrooms. In addition, they are enabled and encouraged to attend activities, places of worship and utilise facilities within the local community. Young people enjoy participating in community events such as the Christmas 'lantern walk' and distributing gifts to older people at harvest time. This promotes inclusion while bolstering young people's self-esteem and confidence. A social worker stated: 'you wouldn't believe the change in him. He is accessing local provision and able to go out in the community. He is making relationships with his peers.'

Excellent contact is maintained between the home and young people's parents. Maintaining significant relationships for young people is a very important key strength. Good relationships and contact arrangements are fully promoted with those who are significant to young people. Staff support contact not just within the home but on shared outings and holidays. This promotes inclusivity and enables positive and fun shared experiences. Young people fully benefit from the security, stability and sense of consistency this provides both now and for their longer-term relationships and support in adulthood.

Quality of care

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

Young people enjoy excellent, warm and positive relationships with staff that are based on mutual care and respect. Parents and social workers say that relationships with staff are one of the best things about the home. A parent said: 'that is very important to us that she is so happy there and people are kind, loving and very thoughtful.' Staff encourage peer friendships and provide a happy, relaxed atmosphere where young people experience lots of smiles and laughter within consistent, safe and appropriate boundaries.

Enthusiastic and committed staff have the skills and abilities to communicate effectively with all of the young people living in the home. A social worker stated: 'he can only communicate through facial expressions and grimaces. The way the staff know how to interpret them is impressive. There is so much attention to his needs.' Staff use these abilities to ensure that young people's views are actively sought in their key worker sessions. This enables young people to express their wishes on issues such as food choices, personalising their rooms or activities. However, although young people's individual choices are implemented, their views on their care or how the home could be improved are not formalised or used to look at how improvements can be made. This means that not all young people's views are acknowledged and taken into account.

Much improved complaints procedures ensure that young people of all abilities understand their right to make a complaint if they so wish. They are further supported by staff who take their role as advocates very seriously. Any complaints made by young people, for example, requesting a change of key worker, are fully explored within requisite timescales and young people informed of outcomes. As a result, young people feel listened to and are safeguarded.

A new policy ensures that the comprehensive information kept on young people's files is monitored for quality and is easily retrievable. Staff understand the purpose, format and content of that information. Young people's day-to-day needs are extremely well met in line with plans promoting their sense of security and well-being. Excellent communication with parents and professionals ensure that they are consulted regularly, contribute to young people's reviews and are kept informed regarding any concerns, progress and achievements. Placement plans identify and address needs relating to young people's cultural background and personal identity, thereby promoting inclusivity and equality. The plans are regularly reviewed and updated to identify clear objectives to meet individual needs. Young people benefit from this collective, holistic approach to their care.

Young people benefit from being able to participate in a range of positive activities available to them within the grounds of the home. These include an adventure playground, sensory water park, cinema, hydrotherapy pool and café. In addition, they are supported to access and attend provisions within the local community, for

instance church attendance, eating out, surfing, playing golf and going for walks. Young people choose the activities in which they wish to be involved after school and at weekends. This promotes inclusion, opportunity and well-being, while building self-esteem, social and life skills. A parent commented: 'at the weekend she has lots of walks and activities and is not just left sitting there. They keep her occupied and she is very happy.'

The purpose-built home offers a range of flats, including two independence flats, for young people. Each flat is personal to the young people resident there and decorated and furnished according to their tastes and needs. This offers young people individualised choice and care. Full time staff are employed to maintain the premises and some areas of the home are currently undergoing refurbishment, for example the sensory room. All of the previously stained carpets have now been replaced with laminate flooring, which increases young people's comfort. Most young people have en suite bedrooms and there are communal bathrooms in every flat. However, although they are clean, the bathrooms are dated and tired in appearance and the floor in one of the bedrooms is no longer fit for purpose. This does not offer consistent, comfortable care for young people.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people are and feel safe. Staff receive regular child protection training and know what to do if they feel a child is at risk. Excellent staffing levels ensure that any potential episodes of bullying are identified and addressed immediately and children do not go missing. A parent said: 'they are caring for her very well and she is looked after all the time because she can never be left alone. She is completely safe.'

Good quality behaviour management strategies are applied effectively. These are informed by individual behaviour management risk assessments. Care is taken to reduce triggers that may lead to a young person feeling anxious or distressed, thereby promoting a sense of well-being and belonging. Staff are experienced in managing challenging behaviours. They work together with parents and the education team, which means that young people are treated consistently.

Detailed handovers between shifts help the staff team to meet each young person's behaviour management needs. A staff member said: 'behaviour management depends on the child, we have individual risk assessments and we will try to redirect them. It's about keeping them safe and secure as well and that they are happy.' Parents and professionals report on the marked improvement in young people's behaviours. One social worker stated: 'he was so violent that he couldn't be alone with anyone, but not anymore...you wouldn't believe he is the same child.'

All staff are well trained in the use of physical interventions. Restraint is only used within the home's agreed guidelines and to prevent injury to a young person or member of staff or serious criminal damage. Staff record all incidents comprehensively, in a log kept for the purpose. This log is appropriately monitored

by the Registered Manager. However, opportunities to capture young people's views following a restraint, thereby offering the ability to reduce the need for such interventions in future, are being lost because their views are not recorded or followed up. In addition, health needs are not fully met, as young people are not always given the opportunity to be examined by a medical practitioner following a restraint.

Robust recruitment and selection procedures ensure that young people are not cared for by people who may harm them or place them at risk. All staff are aware of the company's whistle-blowing procedures and are confident in raising concerns. Any allegations or suspicions of harm are handled consistently and immediately, thereby providing effective protection and support for the young person and all involved. A member of staff stated, 'children are safe here, if I didn't think they were I would do something about it.' Young people are effectively safeguarded by these measures.

Young people benefit from living in a safe environment. Young people's health and safety needs are high priority and strong health and safety procedures for the building are very well managed. Fire safety risk assessments and regular safety checks protect young people from fire. Excellent evacuation procedures and practices ensure that young people of all abilities know what to do in the event of an emergency and staff know how to protect them. All utilities are checked and regularly serviced. A social worker said, 'he is completely safe there and I have no concerns about the home at all.'

Leadership and management

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

The home is efficiently and conscientiously managed. Excellent arrangements exist for monitoring the quality of care by the strong management team. The experienced and nurturing Registered Manager has observably positive relationships with the young people in his care. He maintains a close day-to-day overview of each young person individually alongside the general running of the home. Any shortfalls are promptly identified and addressed. As a result, young people's progress is monitored and the demonstrable differences the home has made to young people's outcomes are identified. This promotes and maintains high standards while contributing to young people's experience of being valued.

A Statement of Purpose clearly outlines the aims and objectives of the home. In addition parents and young people receive information, in a format they can understand, in their individual welcome pack. This clearly informs them about the home and the care that is to be provided. As a result young people are appropriately placed thereby enhancing their life experience. However, the children's guide does not contain details of independent reviewing officers or the Children's Rights Director. This restricts young people's opportunities to gain support from outside the home if they so wish.

Complaints have arisen since the last inspection and have been acknowledged and

competently addressed by the Registered Manager. Effective communication between the home and parents ensure that parents feel confident that their concerns will be heard and acted upon. Young people's welfare, well-being and safety are promoted by this practice. Reports from professionals state how much the home has improved over the past 18 months since the appointment of the current Registered Manager. The home is now described as being, 'on top of things and transparent'.

All of the recommendations from the previous inspection have been met either in full or partially, leading to an improvement in outcomes for young people. Although young people's wishes and feelings are gathered through their key worker sessions, no formal process currently exists for gathering group views or decisions therefore not all young people's voices are heard.

Records show that regular visits under Regulation 33 of the Children's Homes Regulations are being carried out and young people are consulted. The Registered Manager actively monitors the quality of care provided under Regulation 34, Schedule 6 and uses the information gathered positively to further benefit young people in the home. Young people are protected by multi-agency decision making as the Registered Manager communicates with and notifies agencies, including Ofsted, of any significant incidents. Records are securely kept and diligently maintained.

Young people benefit from high staffing levels and the care and attention they receive from the well-supported and committed staff team. A staff member stated: 'no doubt about it, this is a good place for children, we make it that way. I don't think there are any staff here who don't like being here.'

All staff members either hold or are enrolled on the National Vocational Qualification at level 3, or a diploma course, apart from new staff members still within their probationary period, and are taking further training. This is an increase of the number of staff members previously enrolled, which is an improvement since the last inspection. Staff members report that they receive strong peer and management support and benefit from a good, formal supervision process. Although there is a high turnover of staff at present, parents report that the key worker system ensures that their children receive consistent continuity of care. A parent commented: 'she loves her key worker, who goes to all of her medical appointments with her so that she doesn't have to have different people all the time. She even comes in on her day off to go to her appointments. I can't say any more about how thoughtful and kind they are.'

The Registered Manager's motivation, with the full support of the newly appointed head of service, is driving forward the continuous improvement. This level of motivation ensures young people are provided with a safe, caring and stimulating environment where they can develop and achieve in areas of physical and emotional well-being, sustain their educational attainment and have their spiritual and cultural belonging respected.

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.