

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Valerie Shephard / Debbie Foster
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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 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.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: a service that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

Good: a service that exceeds minimum requirements

Satisfactory: a service that only meets minimum requirements

Inadequate: a service that does not meet minimum requirements

Service information

Brief description of the service

The home is run by a local authority as part of its service to children with disabilities and their families. The home offers residential short break care to young people with severe learning disabilities, some of whom have complex and challenging behaviour.

Overall effectiveness

The overall effectiveness is judged to be **good**.

The home provides good quality short break care to young people with learning difficulties.

Young people receive good quality care from staff who recognise and understand their diverse care needs. Parents say that their children are looked after well and that they enjoy their short breaks. Parents feel that their children are happy in the company of staff and feel safe. Young people make good progress particularly in areas of socialisation and self-care. Young people have positive relationships with staff and other young people in the home. One parent said that her child had made good progress with socialisation. The young person had been very anxious at the beginning, however 'was now tolerant of others' in the home.

Young people benefit from good communication between staff, their parents and school. This is a strength of the home as it means young people benefit from consistent care. One parent reported that 'staff are absolutely excellent; they keep me informed before and after visits.' Staff work with young people to understand their different communication needs. Young people have access to a range of aids and equipment to enable them to communicate effectively with others. This provides young people with opportunities to express their views about the care they receive.

Young people benefit from sound management of the home. Young people's needs are well met by a staff team who are experienced and competent in their work. To promote the welfare of young people one requirement and two recommendations have been made. The shortfalls identified at this inspection do not fully meet the obligations set out in the Statement of Purpose. These relate to the night staffing levels, supervision levels and staff yet to undertake the new childcare qualification.

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
4 (2001)	ensure that the home is at all times conducted in a manner consistent with the Statement of Purpose. In particular the night time staffing levels. (Regulation 4 (6))	28/12/2011

Recommendations

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

- ensure that staff are provided with regular supervision by appropriately qualified staff (NMS 19.4)
- ensure all existing staff have attained a National Vocational Qualification at level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People or equivalent. (NMS 18.5)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people experience their short breaks in a safe and supportive environment where their individual needs are recognised and well met. Young people make good progress during their short stays facilitated by staff. Young people are encouraged to develop self care skills in terms of their personal care, such as dressing and attending to personal hygiene. For example, one parent said that since attending the home her child now 'eats a wider range of foods and can dress himself.'

Young people enjoy good outcomes in terms of their health and emotional well-being. Young people attend school and links are actively promoted with parents and schools. Before and after young people stay at the home, staff make contact with parents to share up to date information. This assists staff and parents to provide consistent care to young people. Specialist health workers are involved where appropriate and staff receive training in specific health care such as managing epilepsy.

Young people benefit from well prepared healthy meals. They are encouraged to make choices about what they would like to eat. Staff are aware of young people's likes and dislikes, and those who require special diets. Young people enjoy a range of activities in which they can participate, including trips out in the wider community.

Quality of care

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

Young people benefit from a comfortable and homely environment. The home is on one level and young people enjoy easy access to all parts of the home including the garden. This enables young people to make choices about the activities they would like to be involved in. The bedrooms are bright and welcoming and provide personal space for young people when they choose to have some calm time or privacy.

Young people's differing needs are the focus of the home. The staff know the young people really well and are able to respond to their current and changing needs. Care plans are up to date, but it is not always clear where staff are making progress with goals and targets with the young people. However, observations during the inspection indicate that staff are working with young people in accordance with their plans.

Many of the young people in the home have limited communication skills and require assistance to complain. Staff say they know when a young person is unhappy by observing their behaviour and body language. A range of communication styles are utilised with young people to enable them to give their views.

Young people benefit from a consistent and informative dialogue between school and the home. Staff inform school of any issues that arise for the young person whilst they are in residence, as this may affect the young person's ability to learn. Young people consequently benefit from continuity of care between school and the home.

Young people's behaviour is well managed within the home where behaviour management plans are in place. Because the staff know the young people so well, they are often able to intervene in situations and avert potential problems. Good behaviour is recognised and staff often use verbal rewards to encourage young people to behave in a more positive manner. Young people are rarely given sanctions as staff feel that positive rewards are more effective in promoting good behaviour. Young people benefit from the clear boundaries and positive encouragement offered, which assists them in feeling safe and secure.

Young people's experience of the home's environment is positive. Young people can access and benefit from a range of leisure facilities on site while enjoying a homely atmosphere. Young people are able to make choices such as using the computer, playing on the gaming console and using the trampoline. The recent refurbishment of a bathroom has increased the choices available for young people to take a shower or a bath.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people are looked after by staff who understand safeguarding and have been trained in child protection procedures. This helps to ensure that young people are kept safe. Individual risk assessments and behaviour management plans are in place which assist staff to protect young people from harm. Supervision of young people is appropriate to their level of need.

The home has a robust vetting system for new staff to help to ensure that young people are cared for safely.

Young people are rarely restrained. Staff restrain young people as a last resort when there is a risk that they could harm themselves or others. Staff receive training in the appropriate use of physical intervention. No incidents of bullying are reported. Staff are aware that bullying can occur and know what action to take if bullying is apparent. Staff carefully consider the mix of young people receiving short breaks in an attempt to reduce the chance of bullying. For example, staff changed the night of one young person's short break because there had been difficulties with another resident.

Young people enjoy a physically safe and secure environment. There are good health and safety procedures in place. All relevant checks have been undertaken, including the testing of gas and electrical installations and equipment. Clear and accurate fire safety procedures are followed which keep young people safe.

Leadership and management

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

Young people benefit from their stay because they are cared for by a staff group that is stable and mixed in terms of gender, age and ethnicity. Staff know the young people well and have relevant experience. Staff receive a good range of training to equip them with the skills to provide good care to the young people. The majority of the staff hold a relevant childcare qualification to assist them in their work with young people. However, a number of staff have yet to undertake this qualification

Some staff have raised concerns about the reduction in staffing levels at night. Their concerns are about the impact that this could have on the safety and support young people require. The manager has undertaken informal risk assessments to reduce staffing levels. However, this service provides care to young people who have unpredictable behaviour and health difficulties. This therefore could compromise young people's safety.

Management support is described as 'good' and 'open and approachable' by the staff who clearly value the contributions of the management team. However, staff do not always receive supervision at regular intervals as stated in the Statement of Purpose and in line with the national minimum standards. This could potentially impact on the standard of care provided to young people and the development needs of the staff.

A previous recommendation on pathway planning has been acted on.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.

