

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC066651
Inspection date	29/10/2012
Inspector	Robert Curr
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	14/02/2012
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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 six young people with severe learning disabilities, some of whom have complex and challenging behaviour.

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**.

The home provides highly consistent and well-planned care resulting in positive outcomes for young people. Young people make good progress through their short - break placements, with the young people and staff recognising and celebrating progress and achievement. The young people are comfortable in their placements, and their advocates are complimentary regarding their care and support.

Young people benefit from planned and consistent interactions with staff who are highly committed to their welfare. Robust safeguarding practice promotes the safety of young people. Areas for development include the reporting of quality monitoring; incident notification and the improvement and development of the young people's guide to the services provided.

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
30	ensure that the events and notifications listed within Schedule	30/11/2012

(2001)	5 are shared with Ofsted where required (Regulation 30)	
4 (2001)	ensure the children's guide is produced in a form appropriate to the age, understanding and communication needs of the children in the home. (Regulation 4 (4))	31/01/2013

Recommendations

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

- ensure that there are effective procedures for monitoring the activities of the home; in particular, regularly collate feedback from stakeholders within the internal quality monitoring programme. (NMS 21.1)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people's individual needs, including those specific to their additional needs, are extremely well identified and met by the home's collaborative, shared approach to care. Parents are consistently involved in the care package, and feel really well involved as partners in the provision of planned care.

Young people enjoy a balanced diet and active lifestyles, which keeps them healthy. Young people consistently access suitable health services, for example appointments with a specialist dental team. During their stays within the service, young people consistently follow their own personalised healthcare programmes. Young people have very high levels of attendance at school, and make good use of their specialised learning opportunities. Young people make good progress within their educational programmes and their positive achievements are clearly captured and recognised.

Young people have consistent access to extremely well planned opportunities to practise and develop life skills at their own personal pace. They manage their personal care, practise social skills and complete domestic tasks, all of which helps them prepare for adult life.

Quality of care

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

Staff continually identify, and positively meet, young people's individual needs relating to their developmental stage and their background. This involves an extremely close liaison with families, who share their established routines and support networks for their children with the home. This means that young people receive a high level of consistent care and support, and they make maximum use of the opportunities that come from this highly individualised service.

Young people benefit enormously from warm interactions with all workers, who know the young people very well and clearly understand their strengths and care needs. Social workers and family members all agree that staff are dedicated to upholding young people's welfare and helping them in all areas of their lives.

Staff work hard to identify and minimise triggers to young people's anxiety levels. Staff successfully implement positive behaviour strategies to support young people to manage their emotions taking into account their learning difficulties. This includes having a resourceful range of re-direction and de-escalation techniques that help young people feel safe and secure.

Young people make full use of alternative communication systems to share their views and suggestions for the service. Staff deal sensitively and effectively with young people's needs and concerns. This includes young people having access to a complaints procedure, which reflects their different methods of communication. Staff's openness enables young people to never feel isolated or fearful to raise concerns.

Care plans are child-centred and provide a holistic assessment of needs. The care planning never loses sight of the young person and is implemented with parental consent so that daily needs are always met. The staff are very familiar with the aims of young people's placements and work hard to achieve them.

Although parents maintain overall responsibility for the health care of the young people, staff continually communicate with health care practitioners to provide young people with excellent advice and guidance.

The arrangements for the handling and recording of medication are rigid and highly effective, which means that young people receive their medication in line with their prescription.

The young people experience a wide range of activities and use all of the facilities at the home, including the sensory light room and soft ball play area, to their satisfaction. Equally, young people have regular access to the community where they can extend their social networking. Summer trips have included going to the seaside, parks, shopping and attending local shows.

Professionals who are involved in the service hold the staff team in high regard. Areas of recognised strengths are the quality of care young people receive. This includes enabling families to have the required reassurance that their child is well cared for, so that they themselves can receive a break. Parents' comments about the quality of care include describing staff as 'brilliant' and 'very approachable', and describing the service as 'an excellent provision'.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

There are clear and well understood risk management strategies in place that recognise the personal vulnerabilities of the young people and manage any associated risks. The majority of risk management measures are well documented to inform staff practice in the home. The staff group is proficient at recognising and managing challenging behaviour, and consistently implement the agreed proactive strategies to reduce anxiety for young people.

The home has a clear missing from home procedure that includes agreed protocols with the local police. These procedures provide for effective actions if young people ever go missing and include positive responses when young people return. Positive behaviour is well recognised and suitably rewarded. There is minimum use of physical intervention. Where restraint is used, it is promptly recorded and all episodes are followed up by the manager.

The manager ensures that all staff are suitably vetted prior to employment, so that young people are cared for by suitably cleared adults. Investigations into allegations or unexplained injuries are handled quickly and consistently to protect young people. The home maintains an open dialogue with the young people, their social workers and the local safeguarding team. This means that all disclosures are suitably referred to statutory agencies to help keep young people safe. Health and safety systems are well maintained, and keep occupants and visitors safe. For example, there is a comprehensive fire risk assessment system and all safety checks on the home's power and heat supplies are regularly completed and in order.

Leadership and management

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

The registered manager has recently been seconded to another post within the organisation. The deputy manager has been appointed as manager to cover his absence. This ensures good continuity of leadership. The leadership team honestly self-assesses the home's progress in achieving the service's aims and objectives. Consequently, all staff have a clear understanding of the service's strengths and areas for development.

In the main, the home's external quality monitoring programme includes regular, comprehensive visits as required. On occasions, the reports of registered provider visits are not submitted to Ofsted within the timescale stipulated by Ofsted. However, this is an administrative issue which does not adversely impact on young people's outcomes. The service maintains a positive internal quality assurance system, which helps the home to focus on their continual improvement of outcomes for young people. The home collects the views of young people, their parents and social workers. However, this feedback is not regularly collated within the quality monitoring programme. As a result, quality monitoring records do not capture all of the data that can be used to drive improvement.

Induction programmes are clear and comprehensive. This means staff have a clear baseline for their skill development. Staff clearly value training and the content of

their on-going training programmes matches the needs of the young people very well. Following training, staff put their newly acquired knowledge and skills to good use when caring for young people.

Communication within the home and between the setting and the majority of external stakeholders is sound. While all significant events relating to the protection of young people are consistently notified to most of the appropriate authorities, young people's families and placing social workers, some matters are not notified to Ofsted as required. However, young people's safety has not been compromised by this oversight but Ofsted has been unable to fulfil its regulatory safeguarding responsibilities

Staff provide a very high quality service for young people in line with the home's Statement of Purpose. Each young person is provided with a helpful welcome guide which details the services offered. However, the guide is not offered in a suitable format for all young people, taking into account their preferred methods of communication. This does not ensure that information about services that might be important to young people are shared with them.

Staff state that they feel supported in their roles through their consistent supervision programmes, regular staff meetings and team training days. Supervision programmes for staff are regularly provided and are of a high quality. They consistently include discussion about young people's care planning and review, team plans, support for staff, and the identification of individual strengths and training needs. The staffing levels in the home are good and support young people well in their daily programmes. Young people's records are complete and reflect their individual history and their short-break care plans. This contributes to an understanding of each young person's life and enables key staff to use this information to inform the care they provide.

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.