

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Paula Lahey
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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 service is run by the local authority. The home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to ten young people aged five to 17 years of either sex with emotional and behavioural difficulties and/or learning disabilities. Primarily this service provides residential assessments for children with complex individual needs and can also accommodate children in crisis, in which case their stay should be much shorter.

The purpose built house is situated on the site of a local authority special school and has access to some of the school's facilities. The home has its own transport providing access to local amenities and leisure services.

Overall effectiveness

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

The home continues to provide good quality provision for children and young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties and complex needs. Children and young people make extensive progress in relation to their starting points and thrive in the supportive environment. Children and young people are valued as individuals; their needs are carefully assessed, and a team of experienced and well trained staff provide a personalised package of care and support.

The service is currently subject to a provider led review and is likely to move away from its assessment role towards a multiple use residential facility for children and young people with complex individual needs.

Children and young people benefit from a home that provides a safe and structured environment. It has been adapted to meet the individual needs of the children and young people. The home supports children and young people with complex communication, emotional and behavioural needs and works effectively to ensure that these needs are not seen as barriers to success or development. Children and young people are supported to access a variety of social and leisure opportunities both within the home and the local community. Staff respond professionally and appropriately to self-injurious behaviours and ensure that children and young people's needs are met and their dignity is maintained. Children and young people are happy in their environment and by the use of alternative methods of communication, staff offer young people choices in many aspects of their daily life. Positive feedback has been received from parents and the placing authorities in relation to the care and support that is provided at the home.

To further improve, the registered provider must ensure that a children's guide

detailing the aims and objectives of the service is produced and is available to children and young people in an alternative communication format. The home's Statement of Purpose is currently being reviewed; currently it does not contain clear information about how the service supports children and young people's education, communication and behavioural needs.

Other areas for improvement include ensuring the children's guide contains information about contacting the Children's Rights Director, ensuring that a procedure is drawn up detailing the use of listening monitors and how they promote children's welfare, ensure care plans fully reflect the quality of provision and services provided and ensure staff have the skills to support 'intensive interaction' and 'Theraplay'.

The service demonstrates the capacity to improve in that there is a clear and practicable written plan detailing the home's areas for improvement. This plan links directly into staff performance management systems to ensure that aims and objectives are shared and addressed. The service has made progress towards meeting some of the planned aims and objectives.

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)	produce a guide to the children's home which shall include; a summary of the home's Statement of Purpose; a summary of the complaints procedure established under regulation 24; and the address and telephone number of the HMCI (Regulation 4 (3))	01/08/2011
4 (2001)	produce the children's guide in a form appropriate to the age, understanding, and communication needs of the children to be accommodated in the home. (Regulation 4 (4))	01/08/2011

Recommendations

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

- ensure the aims and objectives of the Statement of Purpose are child focused and show how the service will meet outcomes for children. This relates in particular to how the home will promote children's behavioural, educational and

communication needs (NMS 13.2)

- ensure the children's guide includes how a child can contact their independent reviewing officer, the Children's Rights Director, and Ofsted if they wish to raise a concern with inspectors (NMS 13.5)
- produce a written policy that sets out how electronic devices that are used to monitor children should be used, how they promote the welfare of children, how children will be informed of their use, how legitimate privacy of children will be protected and how children will be protected from potential abuse of such measures (NMS 10.5)
- ensure staff are fully equipped with the skills required to further meet the needs of the children. In particular this relates to the use of 'intensive interaction' and 'Theraplay' (NMS 18.1)
- ensure that all aspects of children's files are kept up to date and, in particular, effectively reflect the quality of provision provided in regards to communication, behaviour and changes in need. (NMS 22.1)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

The home provides a nurturing environment in which children and young people make excellent progress in relation to their starting points on arrival. Staff work with professionals within the organisation, and external agencies to address children and young people's individual needs and promote their physical and emotional well-being. The staff team are clearly experienced and successful in working with children and young people who display challenging behavioural needs.

Children and young people enjoy excellent health and their needs are identified, supported and addressed. Individual needs are documented within placement plans. The staff team monitor children and young people's emotional and physical condition closely in order to provide clear evidence of current needs and presenting behaviours to their consultants. The staff team are proactive in identifying and attempting to secure the services of specialist professionals in order to improve the quality of children and young people's health and emotional well-being.

Staff promote a healthy lifestyle and encourage healthy eating and regular exercise. Children and young people are able to choose the food they eat however on arrival this means that diets could be limited. Staff encourage children and young people to experiment with foods and subsequently they now choose to eat a significantly increased variety of meals and are much more confident at trying new things. Meals are taken around the table and provide opportunities to enjoy a social occasion whilst developing choice making skills, self help and independence.

Children and young people receive full-time education and the home promotes consistent communication between the school and the home. Key workers have a good understanding of children and young people's educational needs and work in partnership with the school to ensure that needs are effectively reviewed and there is a consistent approach to meeting targets.

Children and young people enjoy an extensive range of activities both in the home and out in the community. This gives the young people opportunities to develop social skills and increase interaction with their peers and others. Some children and young people become anxious with changes in their routine and trying new experiences. However the staff team manage this well in order to sensitively and carefully challenge young people and enable them to take age appropriate risks. It is evident that children and young people feel confident and secure with the staff and this enables them to try new opportunities and experiences and increases their self-esteem.

The service works in partnership with families and significant others to ensure that children and young people maintain positive and close relationships. Placing social workers report this as a strength of the service and have been impressed with the sensitive way in which potentially difficult contacts have been facilitated.

The staff team are committed to providing children and young people with an individualised care and support package designed to focus on their achievements and abilities to enable them to reach their full potential. It is evident that children and young people have made significant progress in managing their own behaviour,

increasing social skills, effectively using communication methods, and becoming more self-managing with personal care. These skills have promoted children and young people's self-esteem and have enabled them to feel more confident to transition into other placements. Families and social workers are delighted with the progress that children and young people have made and cannot speak more highly of the service.

Quality of care

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

The home is located on the site of a local authority special school and is within easy access to all local resources and facilities, but also in very close proximity to open countryside and coastal regions. The property is decorated, maintained, and furnished to a good standard with purpose built fixtures and fittings. Young people have their own bedrooms which are personalised to meet individual tastes and needs.

The service ensures that they obtain a placement plan from placing authorities in order that there is formal information of how young people's care needs are to be met. Statutory reviews are well attended and plans are regularly reviewed to ensure that they continue to meet the complex and diverse needs of the children and young people. Staff report that changes to children and young people's needs are discussed during team meetings to ensure everyone is familiar with the new plan of care. Records support this. Discussions with placing authorities confirm that they are very happy with the care that is provided at the home. One family comment, 'the staff team provide a wonderful service and my child's needs are met in every way.'

The approach to care giving is individualised and facilitated through a range of communication methods and high level of staff support. This ensures that children and young people are offered choices in many aspects of their life including meals, snacks, drinks, clothing, and activities and when addressing personal care needs. Children and young people respond positively to staff whose patient and committed approach helps them to build strong and effective relationships. Interactions were observed to be respectful and caring, with young people demonstrating warmth and affection toward their carers.

Children and young people who have specific needs are monitored overnight by the use of listening monitors in addition to care from waking night staff. While the use of these devices have been risk assessed and written into care plans there is no formal policy in place to guide staff on the appropriate use and management of such devices and how they promote the welfare of children.

Medication is administered in a person centred way and with consent. Staff have received training in the safe administration of medication and this includes competency checks of their practice. Medication is stored, administered, and disposed of correctly and this contributes to children's safety.

The home has a complaints procedure that is available to staff, parents and others. Although there is not a specific child's version of the procedure staff ensure that children and young people are enabled to raise concerns or worries through the use of alternative communication symbols and close supervision and monitoring of their well-being. Staff are vigilant with observing non-verbal communication and reassure children when they demonstrate distress or anxiety through a sensitive approach and a good understanding of their needs. All children and young people have an allocated advocate who visits them regularly and supports them to communicate their views on all aspects of their care and the service provided. This is a good initiative and promotes children's well-being and emotional resilience.

Children and young people's self-esteem is promoted through a wide range of varied and purposeful activities both within the home and in the local community. Activities focus on developing children and young people's social skills, interaction with others and how to behave within the community. Children and young people are encouraged to choose the activities they would like to participate in and staff respond sensitively to the planning and provision of activities to ensure that children feel safe and secure when trying new things.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

The home has good systems in place to ensure that children and young people's welfare is protected and promoted. Children demonstrate that they feel safe and secure within the home and during activities supervised by the staff team. Staff are vigilant in recognising signs and triggers to young people's anxiety. Staff support them to feel secure through the use of effective communication systems and clear schedules.

Care staff receive regular safeguarding training and concerns about the welfare of children and young people are managed appropriately. The registered manager is the designated person with responsibility for managing safeguarding concerns and provides a good source of knowledge and support. The home has robust systems in place for the recruitment of care staff and visitors to the home are closely monitored.

Children and young people are closely supported by the care team and staff recognise particular vulnerabilities related to diverse needs of children with disabilities and take steps to address these. Care is provided in a respectful way and staff are sensitive to children and young people's need for privacy and dignity. Care planning documentation involves risk management strategies.

Children and young people enjoy sound relationships and generally interact positively with staff and others. The service promotes a positive culture of managing behaviour with a focus on distraction, diffusion, and de-escalation. Staff are trained in behaviour management including techniques for the safe handling and restraint of children and young people. Restraint records are detailed and clarify that the least restrictive intervention is used and only as a last resort to keep children and young people safe.

Positive support plans provide guidance in how to respond to specific behaviours and staff are vigilant and aware of known triggers that may have an impact on children and young people's anxiety and subsequent actions. Detailed monitoring of behaviour is maintained; records are analysed regularly to identify any patterns or trends and information contributes to the review and amendment of support plans.

There are clear guidelines in place to counter bullying and similarly protocols around young people missing from care. In practice these areas do not present as issues of concern for the children and young people currently living in the home.

The home is physically safe and appropriately secure to take into account the needs of children and young people. Detailed risk assessments and fire safety checks are undertaken to promote safety and well being. Families state that they feel that their child's safety is given a high priority.

Leadership and management

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

The home is managed by a suitably qualified and experienced manager who has the support and respect of the staff team. Senior staff keep up-to-date with new information and legislation and this is shared with the team through regular meetings. Staff talk positively about the support they receive and confirm that supervision, appraisal and team meetings are carried out on a regular basis and enables them to reflect on their practice and relationships with young people. It is evident that staff access good quality training that enhances individual skills, and keeps them up-to-date with professional and legal developments. However staff have not fully developed alternative communication skills and in particular, have not received support with 'intensive interaction' and 'Theraplay' in order to fully meet all of the diverse needs of particular children and young people as detailed on their placement plan. Staff were observed to work well together and are a consistent and committed team. This has a positive impact on children and young people.

Children and young people are cared for in line with the home's current remit, however, the Statement of Purpose does not fully document how the provider supports young people's educational, communication and behavioural needs. The service has been subject to a provider led review and it is likely to move away from its assessment role towards a multiple use residential facility. Managers are currently in the process of updating the Statement of Purpose in line with these proposals. The Statement of Purpose is produced in a family friendly version but is not accessible in the form of a children's guide. This is a breach of regulations and means that some information is not easily accessible to children and young people.

There is a detailed development plan and managers have a good understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement. Aims and objectives are fed through performance management systems and provide clear direction for staff on identified areas for continuing improvement.

Support for children and young people is based on individualised need and staffing levels are of a high number. Most children and young people are assessed as having a minimum one-to-one support and this is provided for. Overnight support is increased to meet the complex health needs of particular children.

Agency staff are used and the home requests that they are provided with someone who is known to the service to ensure continuity of care for children and young people. Appropriate checks are carried out on agency staff to ensure their suitability to work within the service.

Children and young people's records are clear and stored securely. The majority of care plans and documents within children's files are updated on an ongoing basis, however, a very small percentage of records are not currently up to date and do not fully reflect the quality of provision offered or the understanding of children's complex needs. This shortfall does not directly impact on children and young people as staff could confirm and effectively demonstrate a good knowledge of the current needs of children in their care.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.