

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Jacqueline Malcolm
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Date of last inspection	21/02/2013
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This local authority home provides short break care for up to five young people at any one time, who have a range of disabilities.

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**.

Young people benefit from a good standard of care during their short breaks in this home. They make measurable progress as a result of personalised and well-planned care that is tailored to meet their diverse and complex needs. Most young people indicate through their preferred communication and behaviour that they enjoy their visits. Parents, carers and stakeholders speak highly about the quality of service. They have good partnership relationships with staff and consider the home to be a safe place for young people to stay. A social worker said, 'we are very lucky to have this service in this area.' A parent said, 'they are excellent as they are. No-one could ask for better.'

Young people enjoy the benefits of a consistent staff team who are well managed, supported and trained to meet their needs. A serious issue involving medication has been satisfactorily investigated and resolved and medication training is planned for all staff. This is to prevent a similar incident from occurring. However, some staff practices in recording medication fall below expected standards. The provider is addressing this matter.

The manager has a clear vision about service improvements and she has implemented a realistic development plan. However, there are shortfalls in respect of quality assurance monitoring, which has not identified areas of weakness so that swift improvements are made. Not all reports produced following Regulation 33 visits demonstrate how the visitor has satisfied themselves that the home has an effective approach to behaviour management. These shortfalls have not negatively impacted on young people's safety and welfare. However, one requirement and two recommendations are raised to drive standards.

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
34 (2001)	ensure he establishes and maintains a system for improving the quality of care provided in the children's home: in particular, that weaknesses are promptly identified and acted upon. (Regulation 34 (1) (b))	31/10/2013

Recommendations

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

- ensure a homely environment is provided in relation to young people's bedrooms. Also that there are suitable storage facilities for equipment in the home (NMS 10.3)
- ensure that the person making the Regulation 33 visits is satisfied that the home has an effective approach to behaviour management. Visits should routinely examine records of restraint to ensure that the home provides stable, safe and secure care. (Volume 5, statutory guidance, paragraph 3.12)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people have fun during their short breaks. A parent said: 'The best thing is my child enjoys being there. The staff go out of their way to make the respite a very positive experience for the children in their care.' Young people's complex and diverse needs arising from their disability are attended to in a shared environment that is inclusive of parents and other professionals. One parent said: 'They keep me well informed about my child's needs and are looking after him quite well.' This ensures that young people encounter seamless care when they are away from home.

Young people continue to access education and health services during their short breaks. This minimises any disruption to their daily routines. Young people enjoy exceptionally good school attendance, which enables them to socialise with other young people and get involved in a range of stimulating educational pursuits.

During their short breaks, young people are actively involved in a wide range of fun and varied activities. A parent said, 'he gets to go out a lot', and, 'activities are varied'. For example, young people are involved in summer schemes, swimming, girls-only and sensory groups and trips to places of interest. Indoor games, such as arts, toys, the sensory room, plus the extensive play area in the grounds of the home, provide young people with hours of stimulation. Some young people have been involved in the Duke of Edinburgh scheme and have achieved impressive outcomes in relation to their direct participation. This helps young people realise their potential, which helps them to develop confidence in their abilities and strive towards the next challenge. Young people participate in cultural events at the home, such as having Eid parties and engaging in seasonal activities, for example, Halloween. This ensures their participation and helps young people to learn about different events.

Young people are making small, but significant progress to change aspects of their behaviour or develop a new skill when they are on their short breaks, for example, making a cup of tea and trying new foods. Young people show some degree of independence, for example, expressing their likes or dislikes, helping doing tasks around the home and taking charge of their personal care. This empowers young people, which for some, reduces their dependence on adults.

Quality of care

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

Young people's safe care is central to staff practices in the home. This enables young people to enjoy a good quality of care delivered by staff who know them well and can confidently meet their complex and diverse needs. Most young people say that they have fun when they visit the home for short breaks and feel well cared for. Parents and social workers speak highly about the quality of care received by young people during their short breaks. A social worker said, 'the service that they provide is great.' Parents said, 'without this wonderful place it would be harder to cope with my son's problems.' This ensures the young people's enjoyment and positive experiences during their short breaks. A suitable matching system based on young people's needs ensures a good level of compatibility. This promotes harmonious relationships between young people who share similar needs. Staff are alert to the challenging behaviours displayed by some young people and they use a range of distraction techniques which minimises incidents.

A serious medication issue has been investigated by the provider. Measures to prevent a further incident from occurring have been implemented, which promotes young people's safety and welfare. Medication training is planned to ensure that all staff are competent to administer medication to young people. However, some staff practices in recording fall below expected standards and there is potential for young people's welfare to be compromised. The provider is addressing the issue. This demonstrates that they are taking the matter seriously.

Young people's short breaks plans are regularly reviewed and their parents agree with the contents. A parent said, 'I have review meetings every six months at home

and at the children's home. They keep me up to date with everything.' Young people's needs arising from their disability, culture and identity are positively promoted and respected.

The home has well-established relationships with professionals from health, education and social care. This enables young people to have effective support when they need and this promotes their continuity of care. Staff are trained to deliver specific support to young people, such as the safe use of feeding pumps. This promotes safe care practice. Most young people are supported to eat a varied and nutritious diet. Their food is culturally appropriate and accommodates young people who have Halal and vegetarian diets.

Staff know young people's individual communication needs and their mutual engagement promotes good interactions between them. A parents said, 'my son has multiple learning difficulties and can communicate by making sounds. The staff understand him well.' The quality of communication is enhanced by the Makaton training that the staff team recently attended. This enables clarity of communication. Consultation with young people about their short breaks is good. Reasonable suggestions made by young people are acted on, which enhances their experiences when they are away from home. An exceptionally good example of listening to young people is the planned relocation of the sensory room, which will be located in the new extension when it is built. This makes young people feel listened to and valued.

The home is well situated, clean and homely. It provides a good range of facilities for young people's sensory stimulation and enjoyment. Appropriate aids and adaptations in bathrooms and bedrooms ensure young people's safe care and handling. There is sufficient space for young people to play in the home, have private time in their rooms or play on the equipment in the well-resourced secure grounds. A parent said: 'The building is all one level. Nice environment for my child to play in. A range of bedrooms for my child to sleep in. My child is always happy to go there.'

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people are cared for by staff who understand and take seriously their safeguarding responsibilities. They are trained in safeguarding young people and understand the whistleblowing policy in the event of a child protection concern. Young people's vulnerabilities are known to staff. This ensures that any risks arising from activities and their mobility around the home are properly assessed. However, not all young people have an available risk assessment and some are not fully up to date, but the impact is minimal. Young people say that they feel safe at the home and parents and social workers are confident that young people are safe. A parent said, 'I feel it is a very safe and caring environment for my children.'

Proactive and effective relationships with partner agencies, such as the police and social care services, ensure that young people are protected from sexual exploitation and other forms of abuse. This promotes young people's safety and welfare. Young

people do not experience the distress of bullying and do not go missing due to close staff supervision and vigilance.

Good behaviour management strategies effectively support young people who may present with challenging behaviours. Staff are successful in using de-escalation techniques, which avoids the use of restraint. This promotes safer care practices in the home. One young person said, 'I have not seen restraint used.'

Young people benefit from short breaks in a safe environment. For example, frequent health and safety and fire safety checks are done. This promotes young people's safety in the home and protects them in the event of a fire. Robust recruitment procedures protect young people from unsuitable adults who may pose a risk to them.

Leadership and management

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

The Statement of Purpose informs professionals and parents about the services that young people can expect to receive when they are on short breaks.

The Registered Manager has good leadership skills and she is committed to improving outcomes for young people. She continues to manage another children's home operated by this authority and is also involved in a range of associated projects and groups. This presents her with some competing demands, but the manager is supported by two deputy managers who share their roles and responsibilities.

The manager is aware of most of the home's strengths and weaknesses and has a realistic development plan in place. One recommendation made at the last inspection in relation to the environment is partially addressed and is part of wider physical improvements in the home.

Internal monitoring of the home is regularly conducted. However, some staff practice shortfalls have not been identified to ensure remedial action and promote team accountability. For example, some poor recording practices in some young people's medication records have not been monitored with sufficient rigour to safeguard young people against a further potential incident. A missing risk assessment from a young person's file had not been identified and the ages recorded were out of date. Not all consent for activities have been chased with parents to ensure that they still agree with the arrangements. These shortfalls undermine young people's welfare. External monitoring visits take place monthly, but the reports are not consistently thorough. For example, the person making the visits does not report on behaviour management or check restraint records. It is therefore not clear how they satisfy themselves that the home has an effective approach to behaviour management.

Young people are cared for by a well-established and skilled staff team. Staff say that they feel supported and are regularly supervised and appraised. The majority of

staff have attained an approved childcare qualification, which assists them in caring for the young people. Regular training opportunities help to inform staff practice and their personal development.

Young people's records are generally well maintained and show the progress made by them.

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* and the evaluation schedule for the inspection of children's homes.