

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Graham Robinson
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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

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

Overall effectiveness

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

Young people use the service for respite purposes only. They all have a home base where parents retain direct responsibility for young people's health and education. When staying at the home, they benefit from a nurturing, supportive environment, able to meet their needs in a personalised way designed to provide a consistency of care. Individual needs are well identified with plans and strategies in place to address them.

Young people are cared for by a staff team, who work positively, energetically and are fully committed to meet their needs. Some staffing changes, which includes the introduction of a new manager, have taken place since the previous inspection. However, the good working practices developed over the years remain intact. As a result, safe working practices ensure young people's welfare is promoted.

Good management, supported by consistent and effective levels of monitoring have assisted in the home making some progress since the previous inspection. The strengths and weaknesses of the home are assessed and there are suitable plans for continued development.

Staff and young people enjoy excellent relationships with each other, which enhances the progress and development being made by young people.

The young person's guide does not include all the necessary information following the introduction of the revised children's homes standards. Senior managers have also been asked to ensure that the overall numbers of staff on duty at any one time are sufficient to meet the individual needs of the young people residing in the home.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- update and revise the young person's guide to include the contact details for the Children's Rights Director (NMS 13.5)

- ensure that the overall numbers of staff on duty at any one time are sufficient to meet the individual needs of the young people residing in the home at that time. (NMS 17.1)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people are achieving positive outcomes in all respects. They receive high levels of support and care which is designed to supplement and enhance the care received at home. This allows young people to prosper socially, educationally and in individual personal areas. The ethos and working practices of the home support working positively with young people, aiding them to achieve their personal goals and targets. Young people's individual needs are identified and these are reflected in their plans and strategies.

Young people benefit from being cared for by staff who understand their needs. Parents and social workers report the quality of care is good and young people's needs as well met. In addition, good levels of communication between parties ensure young people benefit from a co-ordinated approach to their care.

All young people are in full-time education attending community based schools. They benefit from having daily routines that promote and assist them in their education. For example, transport arrangements between a young person's home, school and the home are well organised and managed.

Young people's health needs are positively promoted. Good health plans ensure individual needs are addressed. Young people are encouraged and supported towards maintaining a healthy lifestyle through diet and exercise, which impacts positively in their general health. Their day-to-day health needs can be complex, but staff are trained and experienced in dealing with these efficiently; for example in specialist feeding techniques.

The home is well established within the community and actively encourages young people to take full advantage of the resources available. For example, the home facilitates all young people, whatever their disability, to participate fully in community based activities, such as local swimming and youth clubs. Activity planners allow young people to enjoy appropriate leisure activities, many of them being community based.

Quality of care

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

Staff have the knowledge and understanding that enables them to address the complex and diverse needs of young people. Strong bonds and relationships are developed between young people and staff. This provides young people and their

parents with a sense of security, reassurance and well being. Signs and symptoms of frustration or distress in young people are quickly recognised by staff, enabling them to manage situations quickly and sensitively before they escalate. A range of agreed, planned strategies are used by staff to support young people positively, rather than resorting to traditional behaviour management techniques. This means the number of incidents are minimal, resulting in less stressful experiences for young people.

The physical and emotional care of young people is excellent. Their needs are well known to staff who are skilled at providing high standards of practical care to a diverse group of young people, many with specialised needs. This is supported by a physical environment designed and equipped to meet those needs. As a result, young people enjoy and look forward to their time spent at the home.

Young people benefit and thrive in a supportive and nurturing environment. While lacking detail, planning documentation identifies individual needs, including religious and cultural needs. Young people benefit from excellent relationships with staff and they all genuinely enjoy each others company. Staff work openly, transparently and communicate positively with young people. As a result young people enjoy a relaxing environment and receive care in a trusting atmosphere where they engage with adults in a positive way.

Staff seek the views, wishes and feelings of young people, which go some way to young people contributing to certain aspects of the home's operation. For example, through young people's meetings. Also, young people's views, wishes and choices are sought on a daily basis, which supports them to make appropriate decisions.

Young people and their families are aware of how to make a complaint and are provided with appropriate information. The young person's guide while informative, does not include the contact details for the Children's Rights Director.

This home is warm, welcoming and bright, with staff and young people mixing freely with each other. The accommodation is all on one level and has been adapted to provide suitable facilities for children and young people who are wheelchair users. There are five bedrooms which are used by young people, all of which have sinks, call alarm systems, television and computer points. One bedroom has a ceiling track hoist.

There is a large dining room and two lounges, both of which have storage space for suitable play equipment and toys and there is a separate fully-fitted multi-sensory room. There is one bathroom and two shower rooms which are all suitably adapted. The grounds have been landscaped and have suitable play equipment for disabled and able-bodied young people. Photographs and mementoes on display reflect young people's positive experiences.

Staff promote healthy lifestyles in a variety of ways. Young people actively engage in a wide range of group activities, individual interests and leisure pursuits. For example, individuals have opportunities to attend community-based projects that

cater for their specific needs. Young people benefit from healthy meals which are sociable occasions. Individual, cultural and medical dietary needs are fully met.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people are cared for safely and feel safe. While no safeguarding issues have arisen since the previous inspection, staff have the knowledge, experience and training to deal with safeguarding matters appropriately. Overall safeguarding awareness and practice, coupled with a multi-agency approach keeps young people safe.

Young people indicate that bullying is not an issue of concern. Staff are alert to young people's specific needs and good supervision minimises opportunities for bullying.

Managing challenging behaviour effectively is a strength of the home. This is achieved by providing high levels of support. Incidents of young people missing or being sanctioned do not occur and form no part of daily life in the home. Incidents of physical intervention are rare and staff are suitably trained to manage any incidents that do occur effectively. Parents and social workers confirm they are kept fully informed of any incidents that take place.

The local authority has appropriate policies, procedures and practices in place for clearing and recruiting staff, with any new staff being cleared prior to taking up their posts. This ensures only suitably checked people have contact with young people.

Young people are protected with a range of risk assessments which are reviewed and updated regularly. They participate in regular fire drills and can safely exit the home if needed. Safety checks to maintain a safe environment are regularly undertaken. Individual risk assessments, coupled with coping strategies, promote a safe environment for all young people. Individual strategies are updated in light of reviews of young people's risks and progress. Young people confirm that the home is a safe place to live.

Leadership and management

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

Some changes to the staff group have taken place since the previous inspection due to a re-structuring of the local authority's residential child care provision. This includes the appointment of a new manager. The home's well-established ethos, aims and working practices aimed at meeting young people's physical and emotional needs, remain in place. Staff understand their role and responsibilities and work with the support of managers to address young people's needs.

The staff team receive regular supervision and appraisals to improve their knowledge

and working practices. All staff either have, or are undertaking training for appropriate professional qualifications. Staff new to the home are experienced in other areas of child care. Staff have opportunities to attend core training events to update their knowledge. This ensures they possess the competences and skills to effectively meet young people's diverse needs.

Overnight and weekend care packages are planned well in advanced giving some ability to group young people of similar needs and abilities together. Staffing levels are planned to meet the needs of each group accordingly, which can vary considerably. However, staffing numbers while adequate, are not always generous and staff can on occasions be stretched to fully meet the needs of certain groups of young people.

Both the internal and external monitoring of the home has improved significantly since the previous inspection. This is due to a revision of how monitoring is undertaken and with the introduction of new report formats. Monitoring reports are completed regularly, are comprehensive, and ensure practice is accountable. Reports appropriately review performance and identify areas for improvements. Young people contribute to monitoring and can discuss their views.

The manager understands the strengths of the home and areas in need of improvement. A programme to move forward identified areas of the homes operation is in place and ongoing. This is supported by a written development plan. The home has a good record of compliance with the regulations, with no requirements or recommendations carried over from the previous inspection.

Despite the considerable staffing changes, young people continue to benefit from highly personalised care that meets their needs. They are cared for in an environment where staff work cohesively with families and other professionals to address young people's individual needs.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.