

Inspection report for Children's Home

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Inspector	Alicea Churchward
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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.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for the service.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding:	this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality
Good:	this aspect of the provision is strong
Satisfactory:	this aspect of the provision is sound
Inadequate:	this aspect of the provision is not good enough

Service information

Brief description of the service

This home is a newly purpose built premises to accommodate children and young people with autism, learning disabilities, and physical disabilities. It is a substantial property built with these needs at the forefront of planning and construction. The home is a two-storey building; the first floor consists of a lounge for watching television and relaxing, with patio doors to the garden area, a dining room which also has patio doors, a kitchen area, a quiet area with touch screen computer and internet access, a sensory room, a classroom and a staff office. There is a large garden and play area with outside play equipment in the gated grounds.

There is a lift to the first floor where bedrooms, staff sleep-in accommodation and the manager's office are located. The home has sufficient washing, toileting and bathing facilities including a wet room and specifically designed rise and fall sink and bath. The house is situated in a residential area close to shops, public transport and community facilities. It also has dedicated transport for the children and young people.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

This is an overview of what the inspector found during the inspection.

This was an unannounced full inspection of this service. The purpose of the visit is to assess all key standards and how the requirements made at the time of the last inspection have been addressed.

There is a wealth of evidence that the home consistently demonstrates the capacity to improve. The overall quality of care and delivery is good and the home has some outstanding features. Further improvements have been made in respect of enabling children who have alternative methods of communication and this is commendable, all young people are encouraged to actively make a positive contribution. There have been additional improvements for young people being able to enjoy and achieve, particularly regarding inclusive activities and this exceeds the standards. The home remains fit for purpose and serves the needs of the young people very well.

Concerns have been raised in relation to the privacy and confidentiality policy, to include all areas of care delivery. Improvements have been made in staff recruitment information, despite this there continue to be shortfalls. The monitoring of the home does not always highlight shortfalls in respect of restraint records and complaints, due to multiple systems.

Improvements since the last inspection

Two requirements were issued at the time of the last inspection. The first was in respect of having a complete audit trail of complaints and outcomes, this has been addressed. Secondly to ensure that all significant events are notified to Ofsted, this matter has also been fully addressed.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

A nutritionist is employed by the home to ensure that young people's dietary needs are assessed and that they have a balanced diet. Young people have been growing vegetables at a farm project and use fresh eggs from the hens at the project, this is a notable area of strength. These vegetables have been used in conjunction with the planned menus and eaten as part of a balanced diet. Young people benefit from seeing how food is grown and contributes to the menus. Young people have a balanced nutritional diet. Menus regularly feature in the children's meeting and a speech and language therapist has developed individual placemats containing pictorial items, from which choices can be made and encouraged. Young people are encouraged with support to prepare snacks and enjoy baking. Staff have a good knowledge of any eating difficulties that young people may have.

Health planning is excellent. Young people have health action plans arising from their health plans, which clearly identify any health needs and how they will be met. All registrations with medical professionals and appointments attended are fully recorded. Information is present in relation to individual specific diagnosed health conditions, to ensure that staff have an understanding of what these mean for young people. Leading a healthy lifestyle is promoted through education and activities provided by the home. Children and young people have access to a variety of health professionals who frequently review their health needs. One young person has made remarkable progress in respect of having their health needs met and in turn this has improved engagement and communication, staff say the change is 'phenomenal'.

The arrangements for the storage and administration of medication exceed the standard. The home has a comprehensive policy for the administration of medication which is followed in practice by the staff in the home. Young people's individual medication is clearly labelled. The home maintains very accurate records of all medication held and administered. Written consent to medical treatment and first aid is contained within individual young people's files. Management and staff have received in-depth, advanced training in administering medication.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The home has a variety of policies in place in respect of promoting dignity and expectations of staff to do so. The documents do not fully meet the standard as it is

not clear what arrangements are made in respect of showering and bathing, use of toilets and personal matters such as intimate personal care for disabled children. Although these activities form part of the everyday care provided for by the home. Young people's placement plans identify how their intimate care needs are addressed in practice, staff are familiar with these, how these needs should be addressed and the importance of maintaining dignity at all times, therefore the lack of information in the policy is having little impact upon young people.

Staff sign a confidentiality statement upon commencement of employment. There is a telephone available for those young people who may wish to use it. Room searches have not been conducted by the home.

The home has clear links with the Local Safeguarding Children Board. Staff have had good training and are clearly aware of their responsibilities to report any matters of concern. There are policies and known procedures in relation to complaints, bullying and the management of any absence by young people. Information is given to parents and placing authorities prior to any admission to the home, this serves to protect the welfare of young people. Due to the complexity of individual needs there are high levels of staffing to further protect young people.

All young people at the home are supported to develop positive and acceptable behaviour. Each young person has an individual behaviour management plan in place which takes account of their needs. All staff have undertaken training and have the necessary skills to support young people. The use of restraint is low and used only when a young person is at risk of harming themselves or others. Staff are skilled in diversion techniques and an emphasis is placed upon always praising and rewarding positive behaviour.

Records are maintained in respect of any sanction or restraint used, the use of both measures is low and sanctions are appropriately recorded. There are a number of bound records for individual young people in respect of restraints and one central record for the home. In one case the duration of restraint is not clear, staff may have recorded the duration of the incident, several interventions were undertaken, but the record does not state how long for. Records are regularly reviewed and monitored by the manager.

The home provides a safe environment, no hazards to young people's safety are evident. There is certificated maintenance of all installations and specialised equipment and the home maintains records of regular fire evacuations. There is an up to date fire risk assessment. Other risk assessments include the home, grounds, use of the vehicle and any activities undertaken. Young people have individual risk assessments in place which are extremely well thought out, they clearly identify any hazards and the steps to be taken by staff.

Staff recruitment records are maintained within the home. Overtime information required by regulation has steadily improved and this is evident in almost all of the files. There are shortfalls in respect of one file which does not include a complete employment history, or what steps have been taken to verify why previous

employment with vulnerable children or adults had ended. The home has a visitors policy which is followed in practice and records are made of any visits to the home.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The home ensures that young people have first rate access to all specialised services identified to meet individual young people's needs. Young people are not cared for in isolation, they are supported in the best possible ways to communicate their needs. Independence and choice are promoted in all areas of care delivery. The home has further improved outcomes for young people by accessing a nutritionist and speech and language therapy which has improved pictorial symbol communication. A children's rights officer has regular contact with the home and comments include that the home is 'always on the look out for new methods of communication with the young people placed there and welcome any new ideas. Considering the levels of disability that the young people placed there have, the staff members appear persistent in their attempts to consult with young people no matter how difficult it is'.

Education is actively promoted by the home. The home works in partnership with all of the schools specific to young people with autism and other local special schools. This enables young people to receive consistent educational, communication therapy and behavioural support. All young people have an education plan and arrangements are clearly recorded in their placement plans. There is evidence of daily communication through home/school diaries. The organisation have a lifelong learning tutor who actively works alongside young people and gives guidance and support to staff enabling young people new experiences such as gardening, shopping, baking, arts and crafts along with many other activities to enable independent skills and positive life experiences.

There is a wealth of pictorial evidence of young people enjoying and achieving through activities. Young people resident have enjoyed an annual holiday. The home has ordered a two bed log cabin for activities. A camping pod is about to be delivered for the young people. They have a farm project that is accessible to the young people, families and carers. Young people were involved in planning and taking part in an Olympics day. A pantomime is planned. Father Christmas is booked for this year to an event which all siblings of the young people placed will be invited. Celebration of festivals such as Chinese New Year and Halloween are evident.

In addition the home are funding a project in Africa in order to support the education of two children, a visit was undertaken by a member of staff to Africa to meet the children. The young people in the home have been involved by sending shoe boxes to Africa containing items to support these children. Young people often access the local community, their full inclusion is promoted and two young people will be delivering the local newspaper in the area with support from staff. The home have delivered training to the local police community support officers to develop their understanding of autism and associated behaviours.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Placement plans exceed the standard and are commendable. They provide staff with all of the required, detailed information to care for individual young people on a day-to-day basis. All young people have a dedicated key worker, their role is to co-ordinate the placement plan and advocate on behalf of the young people. Additional information such as a photograph and pen picture provide a good overview.

Individual young people have communication passports in place which identify how they communicate in a variety of ways through limited speech, pictorial time lines, signing, verbal prompts, objects of reference, body language and facial expressions. These are person centred documents that offer good information, they have been compiled in conjunction with the speech and language therapist who has also developed individual sensory profiles in consultation with the staff, school and parents.

Reviews are held within timescales, young people's progress is accurately reflected. The home has devised pictorial slides to show how young people are developing and enjoying their time in the home.

Contact arrangements are very good, and consistent with placement plans. The home welcomes parents and there is positive feedback provided that reflects the quality of young people's care and staff in the home.

Regular children's meetings are held in the home. The children's rights officer regularly attends. Parents, social workers and teachers are invited to also make a contribution to these meetings. The views of parents include; 'it is comforting to know that he is well looked after ... staff are polite and friendly ... they encourage life skills ... meet sensory needs ... they have surpassed expectations'. Social workers say that staff are; 'child friendly ... levels of communication are excellent ... very child focused ... responsive to individual needs and willing to work with a range of professionals and family members'.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

The young people placed do not currently have transition plans in place, these will be developed in line with their age. The home promotes independent life skills in a range of ways including participating in community based activities, accessing public transport planning, queuing, waiting whilst shopping, crossing the road, promoting independence in respect of personal hygiene, communication and meal times.

The home is spacious, bright, warm and welcoming. It is a purpose built building that offers outstanding facilities and space is well used to meet the needs of individual young people. The bedrooms and furnishings are appropriate and safe for the young

people. The young people are encouraged and supported to personalise their rooms. The home is very well maintained both internally and externally. The garden has play equipment and is secure from unauthorised access.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The home has an excellent Statement of Purpose and a welcome pack containing the children's guide. Young people receive individual pictorial guides to the home. These documents combined give a comprehensive overall view of what the service aims to deliver and how care will be provided.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good young people are actively encouraged to be included in all aspects of home and community life. Staff are good role models, they have 'can do' attitudes and values that ensure disability does not prevent access to any part of everyday life. Young people are treated equitably in all aspects of their care and opportunities. Training in equality and diversity has been provided, however, staff demonstrate limited understanding all aspects of it. For example, dietary needs are met for those young people who are Muslim, but it is not clear how other cultural or religious needs will be met. There is evidence of the celebration of different cultural festivals.

The home has a sufficient number of suitably qualified and experienced staff. Staffing levels are very good, this ensures that young people are well cared for and appropriately supervised. The staffing policy is clear and any cover for absent staff is through casual staff within the organisation, this provides consistency for the young people.

Staff have received specific training and have a National Vocational Qualification at level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People. Other staff are awaiting the new award and are enrolling in January 2011. They are knowledgeable about the needs of the young people in their care. Staff say that they have excellent training opportunities that equip them with the skills to care for the young people. In addition that they are very well supported by the manager and have regular supervision and appraisal.

The Registered Manager of the home exercises effective leadership of the home's staff and operation. The home is organised, managed and staffed in a manner that delivers the best possible childcare. The manager regularly monitors the home's records, this is evident in regularly signing the required records. Some of the records are duplicated, for example the number of complaints and restraint records, this can mean that some shortfalls are not identified. Overall staff recruitment records have improved, however, shortfalls remain. The home has a good development plan in place.

All information in respect of young people is in place and stored in a confidential manner.

What must be done to secure future 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 Provider(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Std.	Action	Due date
22	ensure that the duration of any restraint is clearly recorded (Regulation 17.4 (d))	31/12/2010
27	ensure that where employees have worked previously with children or vulnerable adults obtain, where possible verification of the reason why the employment ended and ensure that they have a complete employment history. (Regulation 26 and Schedule 2)	31/12/2010

Recommendations

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

- ensure that the policy about privacy and confidentiality includes showering, bathing, the use of toilets and personal matters such as intimate personal care for disabled children (NMS 9.2)
- ensure that placement plans clearly state cultural, religious, and racial needs and how they will be met (NMS 2.1)
- ensure that regulation 34 monitoring identifies any shortfalls and remedial action to address them. (NMS 33.2)