

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Anthony Kyem
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This home is a purpose-built property which provides residential care, shared care and respite care for up to five young people with autism, learning disabilities, and physical disabilities. The home is run by a private company.

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 well-planned, highly individualised care that promotes their needs effectively. The progress young people make and the outcomes they achieve are exceptionally positive. Young people make excellent progress in relation to their starting points, across all aspects of their physical, social, emotional and behavioural development. Young people enjoy staying at the home, where they benefit from high quality support and child centred practice.

Parent's report, 'I am very happy with the service they provide.'

'I can discuss anything with the staff. We speak on the telephone every other night. My son has generally two home visits each week and communication is excellent. Staff call regularly to update me, staff complete a diary letter which is sent home each month, his brother's enjoy reading.'

'The staff at the home are very friendly and approachable.'

Young people are kept safe and feel safe. Consequently, they have a strong sense of personal safety. They enjoy spending good quality time at the home, as part of their short-break, or shared care arrangements. They benefit from excellent relationships with staff and they sustain their positive attachments.

Staff are trained in the use of alternative and argumentative communication systems, to involve young people, as far as possible, in all aspects of their care. As a result, young people feel involved, consulted and listened too. The manager makes positive

use of the home's rigorous monitoring activities, to promote and improve the quality of young people's care. They have good understanding of the home's strengths and they tackle identified weaknesses, systematically, to secure improvement. Young people and their families benefit from a service that strives to achieve the best outcomes possible for them.

A parent reported, 'Staff and management demonstrate a genuinely open and inclusive mind-set dedicated to promote the interests of people with disabilities, not just within their remit, but in wider society.'

A young person said, 'I like it. I like going out on activities. I went to the zoo on holiday...I tidy my bedroom, I Hoover it and mop it...We have water fights in the garden... I like the cat at the farm.'

As a result of this inspection, there are a small number of recommendations made, to improve young people's living accommodation, staff training and appraisal.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure the home provides a comfortable and homely environment and is well maintained, decorated and furnished (NMS 10.3)
- ensure there is a good quality training program that new staff members are required to undertake to enhance their skills. This relates specifically to new staff completing all mandatory training (NMS 18.1)
- ensure all staff have their performance individually and formally appraised at least annually. (NMS 19.6)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **outstanding**.

The progress young people make and the outcomes they achieve are exceptionally positive. Young people make excellent progress, across all aspects of their physical, social, emotional and behavioural development. They benefit from a caring, dedicated and highly supportive staff group, who share and implement the home's ethos, philosophy and approach to caring for young people. Young people are highly valued and they are treated with positive regard, respect and dignity.

Young people develop their skills, emotional resilience and self-confidence, as a result of the high quality support provided to them. The home works pro-actively with young people's parents, schools and other professional agencies, to promote continuity of care and positive outcomes for young people. A parent reports, 'Staff

are well trained and understand autism. We feel we are working in partnership for the best for our daughter.'

The home promotes young people's positive educational progress. Young people benefit from exceptionally good attendance at school. The educational achievement of young people is exceptional, taking into account, both their attainment and progress since their starting points. The home provides young people with a learning environment, where young people enjoy and achieve. Communication between the home and school is excellent to promote young people's needs.

Young people make a positive contribution to the home and the wider community. A particular strength of the service is the diverse range of positive activities provided for young people, to promote their inclusion and participation in the community. Young people enjoy swimming, trips out to parks and museums, adapted bicycle riding, holidays and days out on the home's farm project where young people enjoy feeding the animals and looking after them. Young people thoroughly enjoy the home's activities and they benefit from the social, educational and developmental aspects of their experiences.

Young people benefit from contact with their friends and families. Most young people live with their parents, so contact is not an issue for them. Those who live at the home are actively supported to maintain contact with the people, who are important to them. Young people's families are always welcome to visit the home. They report, 'The home seems to be well run and there is always a friendly face to talk to. Parents are welcome to pop in without having to make appointments.'

The home makes a major difference to the long-term quality of young people's lives, by providing a short-break, high quality service for them. Young people receive the support they need to develop their independent living skills, to promote their growth and natural development. A social worker reports, 'The young person is given more opportunities outside their family home, to experience life skills and greater independence. The young person has been in a settled and structured routine which is essential, for her learning and understanding.'

A parent reports, 'The staff could not be more loving and caring towards our son. His independence has really increased and we are very pleased with his progress and the support given to him and us as a family.'

Quality of care

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

Young people enjoy positive and constructive relationships with staff who place their safety, happiness and well-being at the centre of their practice. Staff provide young people with a warm, friendly, nurturing and highly supportive environment. They are pro-active in finding imaginative ways to support young people, including those who do not communicate, verbally. They use signs, symbols and visual supports, to assist young people to make everyday decisions and choices. As a result, young people feel

able to communicate their views, feelings and opinions by using their preferred method of communication.

Young people and their families receive feedback on any issues, or concerns raised by them. They know how to make a complaint and their complaints or concerns are always investigated and responded to appropriately.

The home provides young people with a healthy environment, where young people have access to the services they need to meet their particular health needs. Staff provide encouragement and support to young people and their families, to attend their routine health appointments. Medical consent is in place and staff are clear about what health decisions and responsibilities are delegated to them. Observed correspondence from a parent reads, 'Just a quick email to say thank you for the support while (young person) was in hospital. The frequent texts were reassuring and I felt supported. Although you offered to send staff to stay with (young person) both overnight, and during the day while I went home, I just felt (young person) needed me, at the time.'

The home has access to a consultant general practitioner and dietician for professional support and advice. The home employs its own speech and language therapist to work alongside staff and young people. The home maintains effective relationships with parents, schools and health professionals, to share information to secure young people's good health and well-being. Staff ensure young people's health needs are an integral part of care planning.

Young people benefit from very well-planned, highly personalised care that promotes their needs effectively. Young people's needs arising from age, gender, race, ethnicity and disability, are all positively addressed and delivered, both in care planning and daily living. There is effective communication between the home and those significant to young people to ensure their needs are met, comprehensively.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people are pro-actively protected from abuse, bullying, neglect and exploitation. Staff are trained in child protection so they know how to deal with any allegations or report suspected abuse. However, new staff require access to appropriate training to enable them to undertake their duties, professionally and competently. Staff employed to care for young people are vetted and selected carefully, to protect young people from unsuitable people.

The use of clear risk assessment, safe care practice and strong leadership and management, ensure young people, including the most vulnerable, are protected and kept safe from harm. There are no issues with young people going missing and there are no concerns in relation to young people's risk taking activities. Appropriate risk assessments are in place to alert staff to young people's particular vulnerabilities. As a result, staff know what action to take to address them.

Young people benefit from individualised behaviour management plans, to help staff understand and manage their particular behaviours. The use of sanctions and restraints, if used at all, are kept to an absolute minimum. There have been no restraints or sanctions used since the previous inspection. Staff are trained to manage young people's behaviours safely and effectively.

Young people benefit from a safe, suitable and appropriately secure environment. The location of the home ensures young people are able to access local places interest in the community. The home provides young people with special aids and adaptations to meet their needs arising from disability. Young people are protected from environmental hazards. Health and safety within the home is promoted and managed effectively.

The quality of the physical environment has deteriorated since the last inspection. There are aspects of the accommodation, such as, the home's decor and furnishings that are looking worn and tired. There is torn matting in the sensory room, worn carpets on the stairs and walls are stained through normal wear and tear. As a result, the home looks less welcoming and homely. A parent reports, 'I understand that the building has a great deal of use and that children with autism can hammer paintwork. However, I feel that the place sometimes looks shabby, which is a shame.'

Leadership and management

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

Young people benefit from a home that is managed efficiently and effectively. The home has a proven track record, based on its performance and its previous inspection history. It can demonstrate the positive impact and value it has made to young people lives, and it can show how young people's outcomes have improved, overtime. Managers consistently communicate high expectations to staff to sustain continuing improvement. The home is currently working towards accreditation with the National Autistic Society.

The manger makes positive use of the home's monitoring activities, to promote the quality of young people's care. They have clear understanding of the home's strengths and they tackle identified weaknesses systematically, to secure improvement. Written development plans are in place and these set realistic, yet challenging targets for the future development of the home. The home is relentless in its pursuit of continuous improvement.

The home meets the aims and objectives of its Statement of Purpose, comprehensively. It provides young people with high quality care and support that meets their needs and promotes positive outcomes for them. Staff's enthusiasm, dedication and efforts are all channelled effectively. The home embraces a culture of openness and transparency, where communication between staff and managers is excellent. Significant events relating to the safety of young people are reported to

parents and the responsible authorities promptly, to ensure appropriate action can be taken, as a result.

Young people benefit from sufficient numbers of suitably qualified and experienced staff. Staff have access to high quality support and training to develop their knowledge, skills and professional practice. However, not all staff have had annual appraisals, to review and monitor their individual performance. The recommendation made at the previous inspection has been addressed. Uneven flooring has now been replaced to prevent accident or injury.

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.