

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	David Coulter
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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 is a children's home that offers short-term respite placements for up to eight young people with complex care needs. The home, a large detached property, has been specifically converted and extended to meet the needs of the young people it accommodates and contains specialised facilities, such as a sensory room, outside play area and specially designed bathrooms.

Overall effectiveness

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

The home is providing good quality respite care to a group of vulnerable young people many of whom have complex care needs. Outcomes for young people are good and their physical, social and emotional needs are being effectively met by a group of well motivated and experienced staff. The home is structurally sound and regular maintenance ensures it remains in good decorative order. Appropriate staffing levels allow young people to access a range of social and recreational activities both within the home and local community. Young people met during the inspection appeared at ease in their surroundings and were enjoying the attention they were receiving from staff. The home is well managed and the Registered Manager is well supported by a knowledgeable and capable group of senior staff. Although there is one recommendation it does not adversely reflect on the quality of the care that is assessed as being good.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure that all unwanted material is removed from the side of the building. (NMS10)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Staff aim to ensure that young people remain fit and healthy during their visits. The health needs of each young person are identified as part of the admissions process and plans developed that ensure they will be effectively met during their stays. Consents for medical interventions are obtained in advance of any admission. As

young people are normally accommodated for short periods, their health needs are met on a 'shared care' basis with their families. Specialist medical interventions are carried out by staff who have completed additional training and demonstrated their competence. The home has a range of specialist equipment to assist staff complete personal care tasks safely. There are good facilities and arrangements for both the storage and dispensing of medication. In order to minimise the possible risks associated with regularly handling medication in and out of the home, medication is only dispensed by staff who have completed specific training.

During their stays young people are encouraged to eat healthily. The culinary preferences and special dietary needs of each young person are taken into consideration when meals are planned. Young people's views are incorporated into the planning and preparation of food. Meals are produced freshly on the premises using local produce. Young people can access fruit, snacks and drinks in between meals. Meals are social occasions and there are facilities to eat together in the home's dining room. Staff are always available to assist young people who experience difficulties eating.

The home, a specially renovated facility, provides extremely good quality accommodation. It is structurally sound and in good decorative order. Regular maintenance ensures the home is well maintained. Young people are assigned their own rooms that is designated as 'their space' for the duration of their stays. Staff ensure that each individual feels comfortable in their surroundings and will personalise their rooms with pictures and posters if requested. Young people can access a number of communal areas within the home including a soft play area, sensory room and well equipped and comfortable lounge. Although there is an enclosed play area to the rear of the property it is currently being re-developed to provide more appropriate facilities for those in the older age group. At the time of the inspection only a limited area was accessible.

During their stays young people are supported in maintaining their educational placements and transport is provided to and from school. Staff at the home provide many opportunities for young people to develop their social and life skills during their visits. Any young person who is excluded from their school is expected to undertake educationally-based activities in both the home and local community.

Staff are clearly aware of the difficulties many of the young people experience in processing information. While staff promote positive behaviour they are aware of the involuntary nature of many of the behaviours young people can exhibit. Each young person is encouraged to develop a positive self-image and staff continually reinforce positive behaviour with praise and encouragement. Young people are helped to make the link between actions and possible consequences. Challenging behaviour is normally managed by the deployment of diversionary techniques. Young people who self-harm are kept safe by being directed into a safe soft play area. Staff work closely with parents and teaching staff to ensure young peoples behaviour is addressed in a consistent manner.

Most of the young people only spend a few nights a month in the home. During their

stays they normally do not have much contact with their parents. However, many parents accompany young people on their early visits until they are settled.

Quality of care

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

The home provides an important role in supporting families caring for young people who may have learning disabilities, physical disabilities, autism and associated challenging behaviours. Referrals come via a number of local authority's who determine the nature of the short break support to be provided. The majority of young people access regular overnight stays. Admissions are carefully planned and staff work at the pace of each individual. Young people are introduced to the home via short visits that can include staying for a meal. Young people and their families are provided with detailed information on the nature of the service prior to any admission. Pictorial guides are available for young people who experience communication difficulties. The guides explain how to raise concerns or register a complaint.

The care needs of each young person are identified prior to admission and risk assessments are used to identify any areas of potential concern relating to their health or behaviour. An effective care planning system provides clear guidance for staff on how the needs of each individual can be met. Staff closely monitor the progress of each young person and modify placement plans in response to changing needs.

Due to the complex care needs of young people staff normally work with individual's on the minimum of a one-to-one basis. Young people and staff are carefully matched to ensure compatibility. Staff are extremely attentive to the needs of the specific young people in their care. Staff deploy a range of communication techniques to ascertain the views and wishes of young people and are extremely adept at reading the non-verbal cues of those with communication difficulties. It is clear the young people enjoy the care and attention they receive. Social interaction was observed to be spontaneous and warm. Well-established working practices ensure young people are treated with respect and dignity and all activities associated with medical interventions and personal care are dealt with sensitively.

Young people are encouraged to exercise choice during their visits and are consulted over the activities they wish to participate in. Staff aim to ensure that each young person's visit will be both stimulating and fun. Young people are provided with access to a wide range of social and recreational activities in both the home and local community. The home has its own specially adapted transport to assist young people with mobility difficulties. Staff introduce young people to activities that do not incur much expense in the hope they can develop into interests and hobbies that they can pursue when they return home. Activities in the local community are well planned, appropriately staffed and organised around the needs of the young people.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Due to their complex care needs young people accessing the home are particularly vulnerable. Staff use assessments to identify the particular risks associated with each young person. From the information received, strategies are developed to keep individuals safe. All staff have completed child protection training and are aware of their individual responsibilities to report concerns.

Staff are not risk averse and during their visits young people are encouraged to participate in a range of activities in different environments from busy city centres to country parks. Young people who have a tendency to wander are accompanied by two staff. Staff carry personal detail cards that can be relayed to police in the unlikely event of a young person going missing.

The home provides good quality care and accommodation within a safe environment. Access to the home and grounds is limited and entry can only be achieved via the main entrance. All visitors have to introduce themselves to staff and sign in. The home and its equipment are subject to regular health and safety checks. There is clear guidance for staff to follow in the event of a fire. The fire alarm system is tested weekly and full evacuations, including during unsocial hours, are carried out at regular intervals.

Staff aim to ensure that young people and their parents are satisfied with the care they receive during their visits. All young people have a designated key worker who liaises regularly with their parents, teachers and social workers. Any concerns raised are addressed before they develop into major difficulties. All parents and young people are, on admission, made aware of how to complain.

Leadership and management

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

The home operates with a team of dedicated staff who have sufficient skills, qualifications and experience to meet the needs of the young people accommodated. Staff are recruited via a detailed recruitment process and have to complete an induction programme and demonstrate their competence before assuming their full responsibilities. Staff are provided with strong leadership from the home's manager. The manager is involved in all aspects of the home and is conversant with the specific care needs of each young person. There are suitable arrangements in place to cover the management of the home in the manager's absence. The home has a comprehensive range of policies and procedures that have been translated by staff into highly effective, child-centred working practices.

All shifts are managed by experienced senior staff who plan activities around the needs and interests of the young people being accommodated. Staff have access to appropriate resources including transport. All external activities are subject to a risk

assessment process to ensure adequate staff are deployed. Hand-over meetings ensure that important information is shared with staff on different shifts.

There is a culture of training and professional development within the staff team. Staff keep abreast of developments within the childcare field and regularly access training opportunities. Staff receive regular supervision and an annual appraisal. Staff engage in reflective practice and continually look at new ways to develop the service they offer. Senior staff are aware of the need to reflect all new developments in the home's Statement of Purpose.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good and staff regularly provide opportunities for young people to access a range of cultural experiences. Staff are drawn from across all sections of the local community regardless of race, creed, culture or sexual orientation. Staff advocate forcefully on behalf of disabled young people and confront discriminatory behaviour when they encounter it.

The home has a comprehensive recording system. Records contain recent and relevant information and they are kept in appropriately locked facilities. The home is subject to regular monitoring visits from senior staff within the New Horizon's organisation.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.