

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Natalie Burton
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This service is registered to provide short breaks for up to four young people who have learning and/or physical disabilities. A local authority owns and operates this setting.

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**.

Parents and social workers state children are safe. The service provides excellent quality care that positively impacts on children's lives. A key strength of the home is the commitment and dedication of staff, who build significantly strong relationships with children and their families. One parent reported, 'They have exceeded my expectations, all they have ever done is support me and my child.' This ensures there is effective support to enable young people to develop socially and emotionally. Staff seek all available opportunities to enable young people to positively engage and enjoy their experiences by employing strategies to reduce young people's anxiety associated with individual disabilities.

Young people are safely cared for and the practice to keep young people safe is regularly scrutinised. Young people receive care in line with plans and their needs are central to daily practice. However, some aspects relating to risk assessments need improvement, although there is minimal impact on young people due to the high levels of supervision by staff.

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
32 (2001)	ensure after consultation with the fire and rescue authority take adequate precautions against the risk of fire, including the provision of suitable equipment. (Regulation 32 (1)(a))	10/12/2013

Recommendations

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

- ensure children are supported to communicate in ways appropriate to their age and understanding. These may include communication via electronic media or, where the child has additional communication needs, with the use of suitable aids and equipment (Volume 5, paragraph 2.28)
- ensure risk assessments are carried out to identify any potential sources of harm to the children and are recorded in writing and regularly reviewed. (NMS 10.8)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people attend the home for short periods depending on days allocated by the service. Parents report that young people look forward to attending the service and settle well. A social worker supported this by stating that a young person's body language shows they enjoy their time at the home.

Young people benefit from a healthy lifestyle during stays; they eat a balanced diet and make choices on their likes and dislikes. Where young people have specific dietary needs, staff follow this regime and contribute to planning where any individual progress could be promoted. Young people increase their skills. For example, some young people now initiate conversations and sit at the table with their peers; this helps them to eat at home with their families and access the community. One parent comments their child, 'Is more settled and content. He is sleeping better.'

Young people communicate in their preferred method during stays and make day-to-day choices such as the bedroom they prefer to sleep in, foods and activities in and outside of the home. Young people achieve some positive outcomes within a caring and supportive environment. This is because their progress is based on their

assessed abilities and needs, for example, in some social skills.

Staff provide activities, outings and experiences that support young people's interests and individual preferences. This challenges some of the barriers which may affect young people with disabilities. Young people enjoy visits to the cinema, forest centres, going to the theatre and swimming. This provides young people with equality of opportunity and ensures that time spent at the service is stimulating and enjoyable. As a result, young people socialise and learn acceptable social behaviour, and enjoy more frequent community opportunities.

Young people make good progress in their self-care skills, so increasing independence. A social worker reported staff, 'Set young people targets for independence and ensure the young person meets them, and then set new targets.' Young people who use this service may require support from adult services and the home effectively plans ahead for this. Some young people make significant progress in areas such as helping to make their own beds, vacuuming and other household duties.

Quality of care

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

Children are cared for by an extremely dedicated, motivated and organised staff team. Staff have built a good rapport with young people using the service and are caring and responsive to their changing needs. Young people are cared for and develop confidence in a nurturing and stable environment. As such children, benefit from long term relationships and attachments to key people. One parent reported: 'Staff are fantastic. They genuinely care about my child.' Another parent described the staff as 'absolute gold dust'.

Practice is exceptionally child centred and personalised. The manager and staff analyse each young person's needs and continually review the effectiveness of strategies. One social worker stated 'the service is very child centred' and, 'I can't fault the service, they are professionals and provide a caring environment.' Young people's needs are extremely well understood and interpreted, enabling staff to respond to their needs. This makes sure young people make significant progress to achieve their potential.

A strength of the home is how closely they communicate with parents and partner agencies to support young people's needs. Staff actively listen to parents views, and regard their advice as central to the care of young people. A social worker reported, 'Communication is good and we can jointly discuss the young person.' To support this, a parent commented, 'With the appropriate joint working of agencies, my child has made significant progress.' A staff member commented, 'We work well together, and are child focused and listening is what we do well at'.

Staff seek young people's views through various systems, using a range of alternative communication methods, such as photographs and symbols that enable

young people to make their feelings known. Also, in young people's meetings staff ask young people if they have enjoyed their stay and what else would they like to do. Young people develop confidence and self-esteem because they feel listened to. Staff work with young people to overcome some barriers that they face; they encourage young people using the service to spend time with one another. This encourages interaction between young people and develops their social skills.

Young people's individual plans are well detailed and kept afresh. They detail individual needs, including young people's cultural and religious backgrounds and guide staff on implementing consistent and tailored strategies. Children feel valued because they are encouraged to express their views, feelings and wishes. They feel listened to because staff make time to talk to them. As a result, young people's needs are well understood and responded to by staff.

Young people's health needs remain the responsibility of parents, although staff are suitably trained to respond to day-to-day health needs, such as first aid and administering medication. Some young people's health needs are complex and met by staff trained by health professionals in a range of procedures. Medication arrangements are robust. Records are up-to-date and staff are knowledgeable about medicines that young people are prescribed. As a result, staff provide young people with the level of medical care required.

The service provides a homely, stimulating and welcoming environment. Young people have their own rooms and the accommodation is fully adapted to care for children with physical disabilities; it is on one level with hoists and private well-equipped bathrooms. Young people can access outdoor activities within a secure garden.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Staff take their responsibilities seriously for keeping the young people safe. There are effective arrangements to safeguard young people and young people are safe. This is because the staff promote a culture that ensures young people are listened to and respected as individuals. Young people who use this service have limited means of communication. However, feedback from parents and social workers is that children are happy and safe.

While the service has not had to make a child protection or safeguarding referral, there are policies and procedures in place and staff demonstrate a good understanding of the action to take should they have any concerns about the young person's safety or well-being. Staff receive regular child protection training and have sufficient knowledge about safeguarding young people's welfare; as a result young people are protected.

Staff know young people well, and can often pre-empt a difficulty or divert young people when they appear anxious. Young people's behaviour management plans are

focused on the individual and give clear guidance to staff about managing anti-social behaviour. There have been few incidents concerning young people's behaviour, and where these have occurred, managers debrief staff to reflect on the action to take to prevent the incident recurring. Staff respond appropriately by reinforcing boundaries using signs and symbols, or making agreed changes to how they support young people. Young people benefit from this consistency. The quality of relationships between staff and young people is positive and reinforces the caring atmosphere throughout the home. Young people do not go missing and no issues appear with bullying. This is because they are well supervised by staff, both within and outside of the home.

Practice is informed by clearly assessed risks, which balance minimising risks without impeding young people's independence. As a result, young people are not unnecessarily restricted. Young people's risk assessments sufficiently identify potential risk to them, such as a young person's allergy, and how these risks can be reduced. However, on occasion, some identified areas of concern have not been assessed, for example, young people who on occasion may self-harm. As this behaviour has not been displayed recently there is limited impact on young people wellbeing.

Health and safety is generally well managed. Safety is promoted with regular servicing checks, including fire safety equipment. Regular fire drills ensure young people and staff know what to do in the event of a fire. However, while the home has a fire risk assessment, this identifies a few deficiencies. For example, a door needs replacing in the laundry room. The manager has actively tried to take action to rectify deficiencies; however, the provider has not sufficiently addressed this. While this does not ensure that all areas of the home are well protected against the risk of fire, there is minimal impact on young people due to the high staff supervision of young people.

The local authority follows robust recruitment procedures and ensures that all adults are suitable to work with children. Managers actively involve parents and young people in the recruitment process. For example, they seek questions from parents to ask candidates. In addition, potential staff interaction with young people is observed during recruitment. This means young people are cared for by suitably vetted staff.

Leadership and management

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

The home is effectively and efficiently managed. Young people live in a home which has good management arrangements. This is because the management structure is strengthened by a deputy manager and this provides clear accountability and leadership. This service does very well in providing young people with a stable and child centred environment where there are excellent levels of care and support.

Staff enjoy their work and opportunities to develop areas of expertise and interest. They are well trained and undertake the required qualifications. All members of staff

spoken with gave positive comments about the manager's strong and supportive leadership of the service. Staff work efficiently as a team and report feeling well supported in their role. Regular meetings, supervisions and appraisals ensure practice improves further and the focus remains on young people's needs and development. One staff member said, 'Supervision is marvellous, have my own agenda go in prepared. 'Staff are clearly motivated by their enjoyment of working with young people and watching them progress. There is always enough staff on duty at all times to provide safe care and this gives staff plenty of opportunities to spend quality time with the young people. As a result, young people's progress is clearly evident and noted by the local authorities.

The home offers care and accommodation for young people in line with its Statement of Purpose and stated objectives which are understood by interested parties. There is an appropriate young person's guide. A comprehensive development plan outlines the aims and objectives for the year, with clear reviews to chart progress, for example, further systems to aid communication. However, the home has identified that it needs internet access for young people in order to achieve this.

The registered person actively and regularly monitors the quality of care provided through monthly visits and reports, and the manager carries out internal management checks. Managers analysis feedback received from parents and young people following consultations to look to continually improve the quality of care provided. No requirements or recommendations resulted from the last inspection.

Young people's personal records are held securely and kept confidential. These records inform staff practice.

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.