

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC391594
Inspection date	14/09/2011
Inspector	Debbie Foster
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	24/02/2011
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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 children's home is privately owned and provides care and accommodation for up to three children of either gender, between the ages of eight and 17 who have a learning disability.

The home is fitted with minor aids and adaptations to help support children who may also have a physical disability.

Overall effectiveness

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

Young people receive personalised and well-planned care which reflects their individual needs. The staff team are enthusiastic and child focused supporting young people effectively to reach their potential. Good opportunities exist for young people to give their views on the care they receive.

Young people's lives are enhanced by the strong and positive relationships that exist between them and the staff. This assists young people in building trust and confidence, resulting in them making progress in their daily lives. Young people are safe and they benefit greatly from the safety measures and practices staff implement to keep them safe. Parents say their children are safe living at the home.

Staff have a good knowledge and understanding of the young people they care for and how to meet their diverse needs. The agreed placement plans and strategies to support young people are implemented well. Young people are making good progress, building on life and social skills.

Although complaints made to the home are actively investigated the records do not always clearly set out the outcome and findings of the investigation. Overall the environment in which young people live is good, but some deficiencies need addressing. These relate to some windows and general wear and tear around the home. Mandatory training and other essential training is provided to all the staff. However, not all staff have attained the level 3 Children and Young Peoples Workforce Diploma qualification. The home has not devised a complaint procedure in formats suitable for young people with learning disabilities.

Areas for improvementStatutory 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
24 (2001)	ensure a written record is made of any complaint, the action taken in response and the outcome of the investigation (Regulation 24 (5))	28/10/2011
31 (2001)	ensure that all parts of the childrens home used by children are kept in good structural repair and kept clean. In particular, the windows, floor coverings and the kitchen units. (Regulation 31(2)(d)(e))	28/01/2012

Recommendations

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

- ensure all children understand how their views can be taken into account, and where they have significant wishes or concerns they are acted upon. In particular, that there are suitable formats explaining how children can make a complaint (NMS 1.2)
- ensure all staff attain the Children and Young Peoples Workforce Diploma qualification at level 3. (NMS 18.5)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people enjoy good health and support is given in assisting them to understand the importance of keeping healthy. Staff promote a balanced diet and encourage young people to eat healthily. Young people enjoy cooking basic meals, with staff; to learn about healthy foods. Young people frequently participate in exercise and enjoy the benefits of walking and swimming to keep active and fit. Young people can make important choices about their daily routines and this reduces young people's anxiety about new activities. As a result young people have opportunities to develop emotional security. They attend routine health appointments as part of a healthy lifestyle.

Young people's attendance and opportunities to achieve in education is good. Contact between the home and school is regular and effective, enabling staff to support young people successfully. As a result young people benefit from good educational experiences which aids learning and improves their social skills. Therefore, this brings increased educational achievements for young people, which prepares them well for adulthood.

Important relationships and contact with young people's family members is actively supported. Parents say, 'I see my child every week.' Young people look forward to family visits which supports their emotional resilience. Young people fully benefit from the security, stability and sense of consistency this provides both now and for their longer term relationships.

Young people have opportunities to improve their social skills by accessing community resources. For example, attending a local play group, visiting parks, local shops and the hairdressers. Young people build on day-to-day life skills and enjoy undertaking and getting involved in household chores. This is building young people's confidence and life skills successfully.

Quality of care

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

Strong, positive and warm relationships exist between young people and the staff. Young people interact positively with staff, speaking freely, discussing arrangements for support to personal appointments and social activities. Clear routines and boundaries exist. Consistency of care is demonstrated well in the care and approach staff use to support young people. Staff are fully aware of how they are to support each young person with their behaviour and the strategies they use.

Young people benefit greatly from staff who are enthusiastic and caring. The views of young people are frequently sought by the use of verbal communication and visual aids. Daily symbol and pictorial routine planners are used involving the young person. Examples of how young people's choices are implemented include: activities, personalising bedrooms, menu planning and trips. Young people feel important and central to making decisions about their lives. This assists them in reaching their potential and to build their confidence and self-esteem.

Extensive liaison to support young people moving into the home takes place. Staff take into account young people's diverse needs, ensuring that their move is a very positive one. This is a key strength.

Staff are aware of their advocating role to support young people to make a complaints when required. However, the complaints procedure is not in a suitable format for the young people to understand how to make a complaint and how their complaint will be investigated. Records demonstrate that complaints are acted upon. However, the record for the last complaint made does not record the outcome of the investigation. Therefore, it does not explain the findings of the investigation, if any further action is required to address any shortfall or the conclusion for the complainant.

Young people are well cared for in line with a detailed written placement plan and other supporting records, which the staff follow consistently. Good daily routine plans include the young person's preferences for personal care. Young people are making progress in line with the goals and targets set within safety, education and social skill

areas. Parents say their children are well cared for and are safe. Young people and parents are consulted and can attend reviews. Following reviews, placement plans are promptly updated to support young people's continued progress.

Young people receive medication as prescribed to support their health and safeguard their welfare. Medication is securely stored and suitable records are maintained. Staff administering medication are trained to do so, following the home's policy and procedure. The home's auditing systems identified some errors in the administration of medication and suitable action has been taken to address the discrepancies which involved discussion with the family.

Staff positively support young people in pursuing and extending their particular interests and leisure activities. Young people are encouraged to socialise which enables them to build on their self-esteem and social skills. Young people choose the weekly activities they want to do. Examples of organised activities include: play zone, cinema, interactive electronic gaming, swimming, walking and going on holiday. Young people can access a wide selection of toys, games, books and DVD's. Recently young people have been actively involved in their own gardening project with staff support. A young person said, 'I like to watch my DVD and do jigsaws.'

Young people live in a home that in the main is decorated and furnished to a good standard. There is suitable communal space, giving young people with autism options of using the lounge, play room, dining room and garden. Each young person has a single bedroom which they can personalise. The garden is maintained and safe allowing young people to enjoy using it. However, the following deficiencies are noted. A number of windows have an additional internal plastic covering, which has been fitted for safety reasons. Some of these coverings are severely scratched and marked. This is affecting the view young people have from them and looks unsightly. This makes the house stand out in the street from the rest of the properties. The kitchen units are showing signs of wear and tear, a number of floor coverings have minor damage and some carpets are stained. This impacts on the overall quality of the environment.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people are safe. Staff are aware of the importance of safeguarding young people. Parents say their children are safe and the staff are fully aware of how to keep them safe in the home and when out in the community. Young people benefit from broad ranging risk assessments, covering environmental risks, activities and on the likely and known behaviours. These inform staff how to reduce the risks identified and how to support and keep young people safe.

Staff follow clear safeguarding procedures and guidance to promote young people's welfare. Staff members benefit from mandatory training on signs and symptoms of abuse. This alerts staff to any concerns, enabling them to support young people appropriately and keep them safe. No bullying exists in the home, although staff are

fully aware that any such occurrence is not tolerated and they will intervene immediately. Good staffing levels assist in closely supporting and supervising young people, thereby preventing bullying incidents.

No young person has gone missing from the home. However, in the event of this happening, staff are aware of the measures for searching, reporting and returning young people safely. All young people are risk assessed as to their individual needs and areas where they may be more vulnerable when absent from the home.

Staff strongly promote the good behaviour of young people. Young people have behaviour plans to assist staff on how to manage individual behaviour. Staff are knowledgeable on the individual strategies they use to support young people in this area. Young people say they like the staff. Staff give a lot of verbal praise to young people. There are rewards for positive behaviour, which reinforces good behaviour. The ethos of the home is to minimise identified triggers and de-escalate any challenging behaviour. The staff strongly reinforce these practices. As a result restraints rarely happen and young people are supported to manage their frustrations in other ways. However, deficiencies have been identified in the recording systems. Some sanction and restraint records do not include all the required information. For example, the duration and effectiveness of the action taken. This could have a potential negative impact on young people as this does not clarify if this was a suitable response or if any changes to managing the future behaviour of a young person are necessary to further reduce such an incident occurring again.

The health and safety of the young people and the safety of the building is given importance. Staff implement good health and safety procedures to keep young people safe. All relevant checks are undertaken, including the testing of gas and electrical installations and equipment. Clear and accurate fire safety records are held, indicating that regular fire drills involving staff and young people take place. This supports young people's safety.

All visitors to the building are strictly monitored and they must identify themselves and sign in and out of the home. All staff are employed through well managed and formal interview and recruitment processes. This ensures the safety and welfare of young people is effectively promoted.

Leadership and management

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

Young people benefit from a well managed service. Routine supervision and team meetings take place for staff. This supports staff in caring for young people consistently. The staff group have a range of experiences and express confidence in the management team. Staff say that when they approach the manager with ideas and concerns these are listened to. The rota ensures that there is always a balance of experienced staff on duty with those who are fairly new to caring for young people in a residential setting. This makes sure young people are familiar with the staff

caring for them and to again aid their care being consistently delivered.

Young people have strong links with neighbours and the local community. This is built upon by the staff team with regular meetings and social events, ensuring that young people are involved and part of the local community and know their neighbours well.

Staffing levels meet the needs of the young people being cared for; the staff confirmed this. Staff say young people have one-to-one support at all times. The staffing levels are increased when young people have community activities to ensure staff can keep young people safe.

New staff receive induction training before commencing work with the young people. Staff are knowledgeable on the policies which underpins their practice. Staff receive training in core subjects including: first aid, behaviour management, fire safety, child protection, food hygiene, autism and mental health. This training ensures the staff have a good baseline knowledge to care for the young people. However, not all staff have completed the Children and Young Peoples Workforce Diploma qualification at level 3 to consolidate their knowledge and skills in caring for young people.

Young people's case files are stored confidentially and are arranged in a manner that makes them useable by staff. Good cross-referencing of all documentation enables the management team and staff to evaluate and monitor young people's progress and development. This facilitates positive communication with other professionals as well as ensuring young people and their families have a permanent record of their history.

There is detailed monitoring of the quality of care for the young people. The previous recommendations made on the last inspection have been implemented. An up-to-date development plan identifies areas to improve and build on the current service provided for young people. The manager has a system to report and evaluate the administration systems. This is supported by regular independent visits to check the quality of care. Parents are consulted weekly about the care of their children. The monitoring systems do identify areas of weakness and report on how improvements have been made. This ensures young people's welfare, safety and general care is maintained to a good standard.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.