

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Judith Longden
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This children's home provides care and accommodation for up to six young people who are diagnosed as being on the autistic spectrum and/or having learning disabilities and who are unable to live with their families due to the complexity of their diagnosis.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: a service that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

Good: a service 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 **adequate**.

The home provides an adequate quality of care with personalised well planned care based on individual need. The quality of care promotes improved outcomes for young people in most areas. Young people generally have good relationships with staff and each other. Young people say they feel safe. Staff have a good understanding of safeguarding and this is reinforced by regular training. Leaders and managers understand the strengths and areas for development of the home and have plans in place. There are two breaches of regulations in respect of staffing levels and submitting review reports. There is one failure to meet national minimum standards in respect of promoting independence. However, these shortfalls do not impact negatively on the welfare or safety of young people.

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
25 (2001)	ensure that the employment of any persons on a temporary basis at the children's home will not prevent children from receiving such continuity of care as is reasonable to meet their	27/06/2012

	needs (Regulation 25 (2))	
34 (2001)	supply to the HMCI a report in respect of any review conducted by the manager. (Regulation 34(2))	06/06/2012

Recommendations

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

- ensure children receive care which helps prepare them for and supports them into adulthood, so that they can reach their potential and achieve economic well-being. (NMS 12)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people make sound progress in achieving positive outcomes in most areas. A social worker said a young person has made 'significant progress since being in placement' with regard to communication and personal care routines. A parent said the home has helped facilitate better communication during contact by providing symbols and pictures. This has resulted in increased confidence for the young person and their parent and they have been shopping together for the first time in three years.

Young people are supported to understand their backgrounds, their needs and why they are in care. Staff encourage young people to understand disability and difference and to discuss their feelings and emotions arising from living with other young people. As a result, young people develop a positive self-view and feel confident in their relationships with others.

The young people's health and dietary needs are clearly identified and met. Menu planning is of reasonable quality and caters for dietary restrictions and requirements. Staff are aware of eating disorders and difficulties with eating. Exercise is encouraged in order to promote healthy living. One young person was not able to ride a bike before coming to the home last year but now enjoys cycling and is benefiting from both the exercise and fresh air. Young people's health is further promoted by the effective implementation of daily personal hygiene routines.

Staff encourage young people to engage in activities and try different challenges. They focus on activities that help meet the identified needs of a young person. For example, staff have taken young people to a restaurant when previously they had not experienced eating out in public. As a result, young people develop confidence and new skills. However, young people do not benefit from a full range of community based activities at present as a result of staff shortages. Activities are encouraged in the home such as music, art and indoor games.

Young people are achieving good attendance at school and satisfactory attainments in their education. Schools provide regular reports on young people's progress in attendance, attainment, attitude, behaviour and relationships with others. This develops their confidence and encourages them to achieve their educational potential.

Young people benefit from appropriate contact with their parents, family and friends. Where contact is not appropriate or arrangements are changed this is explained to young people.

Staff are working with post-16 providers to identify suitable work placements and post school activities for young people. Staff have helped young people to open bank accounts and some young people have cards to access public transport. However, there is little activity provided for young people in the home to enable them to develop independence skills to prepare them for adulthood or transition to other services.

Quality of care

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

Young people are able to express their feelings, share their views and voice their opinions in most aspects of their care and in the running of the home. They contribute to their care plans and some attend reviews with support from staff. Young people are encouraged to contribute to their reviews using a variety of methods such as drawings or symbols if they do not wish to attend.

Young people are supported if they wish to complain and information is available to young people on how to complain or comment on the care they receive.

Young people benefit from attending house meetings where they are able to discuss their feelings and progress with staff and request activities and menu choices. As a result, young people are engaged, in part, in how the home operates and in their care.

Young people benefit from improving relationships with staff and develop skills to enable them to interact positively with each other and manage conflict. Good use is made of key work sessions to discuss feelings and behaviour. This reinforces the positive relationships. Appropriate policies and procedures are in place for countering bullying. Any incidents of bullying are dealt with promptly and effectively. Staff understand group dynamics and recognise changes in behaviour and are able to address any behavioural concerns before they escalate. This ensures young people are protected from bullying.

Appropriate health care plans ensure the individual health needs of young people are identified and actions are in place to meet these needs. Young people have access to various medical professionals and staff support them to attend appointments. Good inter-agency working ensures complex health needs are identified and addressed. As

a result the physical, emotional and psychological health of young people is promoted. The home has good facilities with a dedicated medication room for safe storage of medication and a treatment room for the administration of medication to young people. The medication policy and procedures have been updated as a result of an incident where a young person received the wrong dosage of medication. The amendments are recent and therefore there is no evidence of the consistency in implementation or effectiveness of the revised procedures. Staff have received updated medication training and most are trained in first aid.

The home effectively supports the learning and development of young people. All young people have a personal education plan or statement of educational needs on their care files. Staff communicate effectively with school staff sharing information and supporting educational activities and events. Young people are supported to contribute to changes in their school timetable to ensure they benefit from varied lessons and experiences. As a result, young people are supported to achieve their educational potential.

Young people are supported to access additional activities provided by the school. In addition staff encourage young people to form friendships with peers from school.

Young people live in a home that is safe but also provides a homely environment. The rooms are well decorated and furnished with contributions from young people on colour schemes and design. Young people have space to be on their own as well as areas where they can socialise.

Good placement plans are in place for young people that identify the individual needs of the young person and how these can best be met. Daily care plans and routines are devised and implemented. These clearly indicate how each young person is cared for, their daily routines, likes and dislikes, behaviours and how to minimise risks. A social worker said the home 'provides care consistent with the plans'. This means the day-to-day care of the young people reflects the individual requirements of their placement plan.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people are supported to develop socially acceptable behaviour. Staff implement a proactive behaviour management strategy based on establishing sound relationships with young people in a framework of safe and consistent boundaries. Care plans identify individual behaviours and the best interventions to use for each young person. Staff are trained in behaviour management and use various techniques to de-escalate incidents. There has been a decrease in the use of physical restraint and intervention and all incidents are recorded well. Staff and young people benefit from a debrief of incidents. Sanctions are relevant and discussed with young people.

The home has good policies and procedures for safeguarding practices in respect of

child protection, handling allegations, recruitment and young people's risk assessments. Staff are trained in safeguarding and are clear on their role in the safeguarding process. Sound recruitment processes and the recording and monitoring of visitors to the home further ensure young people are protected from significant harm. Risk assessments are proportionate in order to help young people develop. There is a good procedure and protocol for young people missing from care though no young people have gone missing. Young people say they feel safe in the home.

Fire drills are held and fire alarm systems are checked as required. There is a comprehensive fire risk assessment for the building and young people benefit from good individual fire risk assessments. These identify any specific need in relation to evacuation for example, if young people are able to see at night if they have not got their glasses on or whether they understand the sound of the alarm. All required health and safety checks are carried out in a timely manner. As a result, the building is safe and appropriately secure and young people are protected from harm.

Leadership and management

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

The manager and staff have made a number of improvements and met all the requirements and the recommendation made at the previous inspection. As a result, the safety and welfare of young people has improved. The Statement of Purpose and children's guide have been updated as required. Staff have a good understanding of the procedures for handling allegations and the process to follow if they have child protection concerns. All events are notified to Ofsted as required. The fire risk assessment has been updated and fire drills held. Restraint and physical interventions are recorded in line with regulations. The home has been decorated and now provides a welcoming homely environment. Young people's records are kept up to date and stored securely. Two requirements and one recommendation are made as a result of this inspection in relation to staffing, submitting review reports and supporting young people in learning independence skills. However, these shortfalls do not impact negatively on the welfare or safety of young people.

Young people are provided with clear information about the home in formats appropriate to their communication needs. Each young person has their own children's guide which is updated regularly. The home has a good Statement of Purpose. This means young people, staff and parents are clear on the aims and ethos of the service.

The home is managed by suitable personnel who are qualified and have the appropriate skills to deliver an improving service. The manager understands the strengths and areas for development for the home and has a development plan to improve the home.

The staff team have a variety of skills and experience and bring different strengths to the service. There is generally an adequate number of staff on each shift to provide

care for young people. The service has acknowledged the lack of sufficient staffing within the permanent staff team. However, this has continued for a prolonged period of time and there continues to be vacancies. This increases the level of strain on existing staff who will often work additional hours to provide the necessary cover. The home also uses agency staff but this results in a lack of consistency for the young people and leisure activities are often restricted.

Staff benefit from a sound induction process and are able to continue to develop their knowledge and skills through a variety of training opportunities to improve their competency and ensure young people's needs are adequately met.

Staff receive adequate and regular supervision and feel supported by the manager and senior team. Regular team meetings are held to discuss good practice and any issues or concerns. As a result, staff feel supported to continue to provide a satisfactory service for young people.

The home has good procedures for monitoring the quality of the service provided and the welfare of the young people. The registered provider undertakes visits to the home in accordance with regulations and carries out checks to ensure the welfare of young people is monitored. The registered provider consults with young people to identify any areas for development to improve the quality of care provided. The manager monitors records kept by the home to identify any concerns, patterns or trends. However, these are not forwarded to Ofsted regularly as required. All significant events relating to the protection of young people in the home are notified as appropriate and actions taken as required. As a result, young people are consulted about the quality of care they receive and how effectively their needs are met and their welfare and protection is monitored.

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.