

## Inspection report for children's home

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| <b>Unique reference number</b> | SC397293        |
| <b>Inspection date</b>         | 27/09/2013      |
| <b>Inspector</b>               | Caroline Oldham |
| <b>Type of inspection</b>      | Full            |
| <b>Provision subtype</b>       | Children's home |

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| <b>Date of last inspection</b> | 06/12/2012 |
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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 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 **adequate**.

The staff team know the children and young people very well, and so are able to provide highly personalised care. Each child or young person has a clear, very detailed care plan that is designed to meet their specific needs. Young people make steady progress in relation to their starting points through the consistent care provided by the staff team. They are able to develop their skills in preparation for adult life but their opportunities for cooking are limited. Where appropriate, children and young people are involved in their care plans and reviews, and parents are kept fully informed and involved in all aspects of their child's care.

Children and young people are well cared for, and show happiness and pleasure. Parents and social workers say that children and young people are making progress in many areas of their lives. Young people are involved some aspects of the home, such as, choosing activities, food and personal décor. Children's and young people's health needs are well met.

Leaders have systems in place to monitor progress, but parents are not consulted on a regular basis. The acting manager is aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the home, but he has no system to identify trends and issues of concern, or for consultation with children, their parents and placing authorities. Staff do not receive regular supervision, although they say that they feel well supported; through team meetings and informal discussion. The staff team are dedicated and caring and children and young people benefit; so that social skills and behaviours improve over time.

Generally children and young people are kept safe through thorough safe working practices, which are well risk assessed. Any child protection concerns are robustly investigated by senior managers to ensure children and young people are safe. Physical interventions and sanctions are very rarely used, and children and young people's behaviours improve through imaginative rewards strategies and calm, consistent care. Consequently, young people make progress in keeping themselves safe.

## 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   |
|--------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| 33<br>(2001) | ensure that the person carrying out the visit interviews, with their consent and in private, the parents and relatives of the children accommodated there, as appears necessary in order to form an opinion of the standard of care provided in the home (Regulation 33(4)(a)) | 29/11/2013 |
| 34<br>(2001) | ensure that the registered person maintains a system for monitoring matters set out in Schedule 6 at appropriate intervals; and for improving the quality of care in the children's home (Regulation 34 (1))                                                                   | 29/11/2013 |
| 34<br>(2001) | ensure that the system provides for consultation with children accommodated in the home, their parents and placing authorities (Regulation 34 (3))                                                                                                                             | 29/11/2013 |

### 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 develop practical skills including cooking (NMS 12.1)
- ensure that staff have access to support and advice, and are provided with regular supervision by appropriately qualified and experienced staff (NMS 19.4)

### Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **adequate**.

All the children and young people in this home have complex learning needs. They are all happy in the home, and they thrive in the calm, caring environment; building their confidence and their self-esteem. For example, they learn to manage their frustrations without harming themselves or others, and they enjoy going out into the community to experience everyday activities and special events such as concerts.

Children and young people's health is good, due to the healthy lifestyle that they all enjoy, with plenty of opportunities for exercise. All children and young people enjoy a good range of wholesome, well prepared food. Staff show good attention to their health needs ensuring that children have the correct medication at the correct time to meet their physical and mental health needs.

The children and young people are gradually becoming more confident in their skills to prepare them for adult life. They learn to manage their own self-care, take care of their laundry, and their bedrooms and some enjoy making their own breakfast.

Children and young people benefit from appropriate contact with family, friends and other people who are important to them. Contact arrangements are very well supported, so that children and young people enjoy positive and rewarding times with those close to them.

## Quality of care

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

The home is now well staffed. Recent recruitment ensures that children and young people are cared for by a consistent team of staff who know them well. The staff report that they work well together, they enjoy their work and talk with enthusiasm about the children and young people. They work very hard to understand the wishes and feelings of the children and young people, who sometimes struggle to express themselves. This means that children and young people become more relaxed as they do not experience the frustrations of not being understood. For example, a young person would try and hurt staff through biting and pinching, this has now stopped as staff gain a better understanding, and more appropriate communication is used by the young person to express themselves. Generally children and young people are happy and content because their needs are met by staff who understand them.

Children and young people influence the care that they receive, and examples were shared of choices that they make, for example, choosing menus and activities. Their bedrooms are a testament to their personal taste; for some they reflect interests in the planets and space travel, others like bright colours, and some prefer a more minimalist style. Children and young people are encouraged to attend commissioning group consultations about activities they want. There are also some in-house group meetings for children and young people, and they have regular meetings with an independent visitor.

Children and young people have very clear, detailed care plans that set out their

specific, individualised needs. Care plans include all relevant information about their disabilities, and any religious and cultural backgrounds. They are very comprehensive documents and very well managed. The paper documentation is supported by good on-line daily recording which is held securely on a central server. The independence folders for each child and young person sets out target for their development, covering aspects of personal self care, development of social skills and developing life skills for greater independence. An excellent simple system for daily monitoring ensures that children and young people make progress.

Children and young people all have complex health needs. When a child or young person is admitted, they are registered with the local health professionals; the system is closely monitored by specialist learning disability qualified nurses who oversee all medical issues. In addition, staff are attentive to the health needs of children and young people and make appropriate referrals for specialist support. All children and young people have a healthy diet and enjoy many activities either playing with equipment and bikes in the garden or roller skating, trips to the park and swimming.

Social workers and parents speak highly about the home and they are pleased with the care that the children and young people receive. They say that they have noticed how the children and young people have made progress; for example, they are able to manage crossing roads and dealing with crowded public spaces. Their behaviour is much improved, and for some their physical development has improved dramatically; enhancing their dignity and independence. They say that staff work hard to enhance their visits to the children and young people, whether this is at the home or elsewhere, through preparing the child well or offering additional staff support.

All children and young people attend school and there are excellent relationships between the various schools. Regular correspondence is maintained via email, phone calls and the school-to-home communications books. Where behavioural issues are identified, staff work together to identify a plan which is followed by all in caring for the child. For example, staff use a simple token reward system from Monday to Thursday, and if the young person goes to school every day they get a token every day which means they may have their reward on Friday; wearing their favourite item of clothing. Young people may be on slightly reduced time-tables to encourage attendance and a good attention span. This ensures that children and young people get the very best from their time in education. Consequently, children and young people enjoy going to school and their attendance is good.

Young people are sensitively prepared for transition to adult care settings. Good use is made of 'social stories' which are read regularly to young people to get them used to the idea of transitions. Excellent simple targets are followed through with all young people to help them develop their personal self-care skills and to learn some independence skills, such as making their own breakfast, undertaking some laundry skills and other tasks. Although there is limited opportunities for cooking as young people are unable to gain access to the kitchen. Staff are sensitive to the amount of support required to help young people grow in confidence and learn new skills.

The home is purpose built, close to the centre of the town and public transport. There are shops, parks and other facilities close by. A recent programme of refurbishment makes the home bright and attractive. There is plenty of communal areas including an art room, computer area, dining room and two lounges. Children and young people's bedrooms are particularly colourful, and reflect their personal tastes and interests. The layout is very spacious, and there is a large, well- equipped garden.

### **Safeguarding children and young people**

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

Staff work very hard to keep children and young people safe in the home. They are sensitive about how they manage issues of personal care with respect to young people's dignity, and consideration of issues of safeguarding. There are comprehensive risk assessments for every young person, and these are regularly reviewed and updated. They continually review strategies to keep young people safe, especially where young people may try to hurt themselves or others. Some young people are very sensitive to their environment, and so staff make arrangements to make these children and young people feel safe. When out in the community children and young people are kept safe through various strategies including higher staffing levels. There have been no incidents of children or young people going missing.

Staff regularly review strategies for managing behaviour and in recent months there has been a significant shift in approach. This has helped children and young people make significant strides in their behaviours and there has been a significant reduction in the use of sanctions and restraints. Sanctions are now rarely used, but systems of rewards are used which encourage positive behaviour. These work well and children and young people are delighted to receive simple tokens for good behaviour which can be exchanged for treats. This helps to keep all young people safe and to feel safe.

Any allegations of child protection are robustly investigated and actions taken by senior managers to ensure children and young people are kept safe. All staff are now up-to-date with safeguarding training and their knowledge and confidence is good. They are very clear about how they would deal with any issues of concern.

The staff recruitment and selection process is rigorous, and comprehensive checks are made to ensure that children and young people are always cared for by appropriately experienced staff. The acting manager is actively involved in all recruitment and staffing shortfalls have been addressed, and the home is well staffed. If agency staff are needed this is now restricted to a very small number of people, so they know the children and young people very well; this offers good consistency of care.

The environment is well maintained, and kept safe through a system of internal safety checks and risk assessments. In addition, services such as electricity, electrical

appliances and fire fighting equipment are regularly checked by the appropriate professional companies. Visitors to the home have their identification checked on arrival and they are signed in and out. Consequently, children and young people live and are cared for in a safe environment and are kept safe.

## Leadership and management

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

The home is currently being managed by an acting manager and his senior team. The registered person carries out generally comprehensive monthly monitoring visits under Regulation 33, although these do not involve any consultation with parents. The acting manager has a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the home but he has not yet had the opportunity to put in place reviews of the quality of care under Regulation 34. This lack of strategic overview prevents a coherent plan for the home. Although significant developments are taking place, they are ad hoc rather than part of an overall strategy.

The acting manager supports staff to draw out their skills and expertise, and develop their knowledge. Staff confirm that they feel well-supported and valued by the acting manager, and that they are able to seek advice and support whenever necessary. Although perusal of supervision records indicate that formal supervision is not occurring on a regular basis. However, team meetings occur regularly and are well attended. They are opportunities for staff to hold comprehensive discussions about the children and young people, and their care and behaviour management strategies. All discussions are well recorded.

There were two recommendations set at the last inspection. One related to the entries in records to ensure that they are legible, clearly expressed and non-stigmatising. All daily children's records are now recorded electronically and they are regularly sampled by the acting manager for quality. Random samples seen confirm that they now meet the recommended standard. The second recommendation related to the use of sanctions, to ensure children are encouraged to take responsibility for their behaviour, in a way that is appropriate to their age and abilities. Since the last inspection there has been a significant reduction in the use of sanctions as they were not effective. There is now a greater emphasis on helping young people to manage their behaviour in more appropriate ways. Young people's behaviour is now improving through incentive schemes which are much more successful.

There is a clear, well-written Statement of Purpose which explains the aims and objectives of the home. The placing authority and parents are clear about the aims and objectives of the home, and the services and facilities it provides. Children and young people are clear about how they will be cared for and their future plans.

The staff team work well together. There are good handover discussions and supporting documentation to ensure each shift is well managed, and staff have a clear understanding of their roles and tasks. There are good staffing levels across



day and night shifts, which ensure that young people receive the levels of care that they need. Staff receive regular training and refresher training, and all staff are suitably qualified or working towards professional qualifications. This ensures a confident staff group who are able to meet the objectives of the care plans of the young people.

## 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.