

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC397344
Inspection date	06/07/2011
Inspector	Maria McGranaghan
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	23/02/2011
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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

The home provides care and accommodation for three children and young people who have learning and physical disabilities.

Overall effectiveness

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

Young people live in a caring and supportive environment that enables them to make good progress. Achievements in education, behaviour, communication and social mobility are being consistently met and in turn providing excellent outcomes for the young people.

Young people are safe and feel protected from significant harm. They are positive about the care they receive and the relationships they have formed with staff. Young people thrive in a home that provides a nurturing and safe foundation supporting young people with both physical and learning disability.

Young people benefit from very well-planned and personalised care. Clear and detailed placement plans include essential information that ensures the young people are cared for consistently and in line with their individual needs. Staff work together with external services and this ensures young people get the right help, guidance and support. Young people's consultation is seen as important to the overall running of the home. Staff actively seek young people's views about all aspects of their care, through the use of story boards and via the picture exchange communication system. This enables young people to express their views through visual aids and in the knowledge that their opinions, suggestions and moans and groans will be taken seriously.

Young people benefit from excellent relationships with staff. High staff ratios ensure that young people are afforded the care and attention they need in order to feel safe and secure in the home. Staff receive regular training, supervision and support and this is complemented by the home having a strong staff team. Staff have a very good understanding of young people's needs and consistently offer a nurturing environment for young people to thrive and grow.

The home is very well managed and the manager places a strong emphasis on providing a high standard of child care practice. Effective monitoring systems are in place and help to ensure that care is reviewed regularly and updated in accordance with the needs of the young people.

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people have made excellent progress in areas of education, communication, social awareness and integration. They have exceptional opportunities to explore their community and surrounding areas with the support of a committed staff team.

Staff have a superb understanding of young people's everyday routines and this is supported by individual daily living plans that help to ensure young people understand the plans for each day. Furthermore, a range of pictorial information is displayed within the home and this helps young people know the staff who will be working with them as well as the menu and evening arrangements.

Young people are supported to understand their environment and particular circumstance by the use of individual communication aids such as, widgets, story boards and signs. Young people's sensory needs are exceptionally well managed. They enjoy a pleasurable individual sensory diet, that encourages them to feel, taste, and smell different foods, thus enabling them to make informed choices about the home's menus. Communication aids are adapted to suit individual need and serve to maximise individual potential.

Staff support young people to live and lead healthy lives. Detailed health care plans capture individual health needs and are supported by regular practitioner assessments. Medication is robustly monitored and effectively administered ensuring that young people receive the correct amount in accordance with their health needs. Young people's psychological and emotional well-being is clearly viewed as important within the home. Consistent keywork sessions coupled with excellent relationships with staff help to support young people to express their feelings. However, staff acknowledge that changes in behaviour or mannerisms can be an indicator of underlying illness. Changes are regularly assessed and reported ensuring the appropriate action is taken where necessary.

Young people have made wonderful progress in the area of education. The home maintains daily links including offering additional support at lunchtime to assist young people to develop the skills to cope in different situations. Some young people will be making the transition into adult education. Staff recognise young people's anxiety and have developed plans to ensure the transitions are well timed and planned and that they have the support they require to move on positively

Young people enjoy a wide range of recreational activities, including scouts, walking, swimming and visiting activity centres such as soft play, snow centre and the zoo. Similarly, young people have ample opportunity to explore their sensory development within the home using the range of specifically designed toys and equipment. Risk assessments for all activities are in place and this helps ensure young people's individual complexities are taken into account and their safety maintained. For many, these experiences are unique. Staff said, 'affording young people different types of experiences enhances their overall confidence and develops a willingness to try different things.' Photographs of young people taking part and enjoying various activities gives a clear indication of the trust they have developed in the staff team and their growing confidence in trying out different activities. .

Young people have well planned contact with their families. Individual contact arrangements are suitably agreed and recorded thus providing a transparent contact plan. Families speak highly of the service and commented on the home's commitment to the young people living in the home. The shared care approach ensures that families are involved in the day to day planning for young people and have an active voice in the decisions being made. A parent said, 'They are all brilliant, they keep us informed and we have developed a really good relationship with the home. They are all very caring people.'

Young people's individual plans, including pathway plans, clearly identify key areas for specific development, including the enhancement of independence skills. Young people are consistently encouraged and supported to undertake simple tasks by themselves such as getting dressed, washing and making simple food such as a sandwich. A great deal of care is taken to provide the right level of support without infringing on the young person's right to take their time or explore the activity in greater detail. Such excellent practice enhances young people's self-esteem and confidence while developing their abilities at a suitable individual level.

Quality of care

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

Young people enjoy extremely positive relationships with staff. Exceptionally good assessments of individual need ensure that young people receive the correct level of support and guidance that assists to maximise their overall potential.

Young people's positive behaviour and their smallest achievements are recognised and praised by all staff. Visual expression and clear communication coupled with highly visual story boards and signs assist young people to receive praise while also assisting them to recognise their own achievements. The home does not use sanctions. Staff use a range of de-escalation techniques in order to distract young people from negative behaviour. These include communication aids in order to ascertain the young people's feelings. This effective measure assists young people to express themselves appropriately resulting in their immediate needs being suitably met.

Young people's care is exceptionally well planned. The objective of the placement is clearly outlined to show what young people and staff are working towards. Individual placement plans inform the day-to-day running of the home ensuring specific need is both consistently and effectively met. Placement plans recognise young people as individuals with different needs, backgrounds, interests and views. They ensure that young people receive an individual service designed to meet their personal needs, cultural background and personal identity including gender, faith, disability and sexual orientation. Consistent and highly valuable keywork sessions support individual plans and assist young people in meeting their individual targets. Staff work closely with young people's parents and other agencies in order to consistently monitor progress. This practice takes into account changes in their lives and is essential in identifying the best way to consistently support young people.

Young people and their families have access to a range of excellent visual information including the complaints procedure. The procedure is designed and developed to suit their individual needs and understanding. There have been no complaints in the home since the last inspection. Young people benefit from committed staff that prioritise and encourage young people's participation. Young people make decisions about their care such as, menus, bedroom décor and activities. Matters are recorded and young people receive a copy in both sign language and the picture exchange communication system for their own personal records. Information is clearly used to inform practice including young people's daily living plans and placement plans emphasising their personal contribution.

The home has developed extremely good relationships with families who are encouraged and supported to comment and make suggestions about the young people's care. A parent said 'I have no complaints, they are great and they work they do is fantastic, my child has really come on.' Parents and social workers receive a monthly report from the home and this details all aspects of the young person's care for each month. A social worker also commented, 'I think this is a great home they are clearly committed to the young people'. Young people benefit from a committed staff team that promote a holistic approach to ensuring young people's needs are effectively met.

Young people live in a home environment where equality and diversity is promoted on a day to day basis. Staff understand the challenges that young people face and explore different ways to overcome barriers with the young people. Central to their work is the ongoing integration of young people in the community. The manager commented 'the neighbours have a real affection for our young people and invite them with staff for tea and biscuits they have even knitted special blankets for them, the young people love their blankets.' Young people regularly attend scouts, swimming club, soft play while also engaging in the home's social activities such as meals out exploring international cuisine and visits to the zoo and snow centre. Comparatively the home has a fabulous range of material such as books and posters promoting individual difference and at a level young people can understand. The home demonstrates a commitment to ensuring young people with complex difficulties are afforded equal opportunities within their home and local community.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people receive a high level of support in order to maintain their overall safety and well-being, as a result there have been no young people missing from home. Positive behaviour is both promoted and rewarded and as a result the home has been complemented by external agencies on the progress young people are making. Behaviour management strategies focus on de-escalation techniques and take into account the individual needs of young people through excellent care planning and clear risk assessments.

The home maintains a restraint policy although it operates a zero restraint plan; that acknowledges the psychological impact on young people who are unable to communicate their needs independently. One staff said, 'we always use de-escalation or re-direction, they are trying to express their feelings, we don't want to stop them from doing that, we just try and show them different ways of doing it. We work on the basis of continued support using encouragement and a very calm approach.' Staff recognise that some young people's behaviour can prove disruptive to others. Clear and effective strategies are in place, including group discussions, keyworker sessions and one to one staffing, in order to reduce the impact on others. Likewise staff respond quickly and effectively to unpredictable behaviour and disruption in the home and recognise young people's vulnerabilities. As a result young people feel safe and know that staff are there to support and protect them.

The home maintains focussed policies and procedures for the protection of young people living in the home. Similarly, staff are appropriately trained in order to respond quickly and efficiently to allegations or suspicions of abuse. Staff acknowledge young people's vulnerabilities, including communication difficulties, that can serve to hamper a young person's ability to make their feelings known. Extremely effective communication aids and excellent relationships with parents and external agencies promote a holistic approach in maintaining young people's overall safety.

The home employs a robust recruitment procedure that ensures young people are only cared for by staff that are appropriately checked in order to work in the home. Visitors are appropriately vetted and this helps to make sure that young people are protected while in their home.

Young people live in a spacious and well equipped home suitable to meet their complex needs. Specific adaptations are in place to maximise mobility and they are regularly checked to ensure the continuing safety of young people. Similarly, health and safety risk assessments are regularly reviewed and internal checks are consistently undertaken as part of the home's risk management strategy.

Leadership and management

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

Young people live in a home that is effectively managed in their best interests. The home meets the aims and objectives of the Statement of Purpose, and young people, families and social workers are clear about the services and support the home provides.

The manager and staff demonstrate a strong commitment to delivering excellent child care practice tailored to the individual and personal needs of the young people they look after. The effectiveness of this approach is measurable in the outstanding progress young people have made such as in their education, social integration, communication skills and in developing their transition into adulthood.

The manager has a clear and realistic understanding of the strengths of the service and areas for further progression based on excellent auditing and monitoring practices. Furthermore the manager makes exceptional use of reflective practice ensuring excellent communication and consultation with young people, staff and social workers.

Effective internal and external monitoring systems provide the home with a consistent approach to the overall monitoring of care. Detailed information highlights areas for development and the manager's action plans detail the methods used to enhance the service. Staff feel very well supported by the manager and feel they work as a unit striving for excellent outcomes for each young person. One staff said, 'we are able to discuss anything with the manager and they will listen without prejudice, this is a very happy home and we all love working here.'

The home has made good progress in addressing the three previous recommendations from the last inspection. Specifically, young people's complaints information has been improved and enables young people to highlight any concerns easily. Additionally, transition packages for young people moving in or out of the home have been further developed and consultation methods have been expanded to include all people involved in the child's life.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.