

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	02/10/2013
Inspector	Stephen Halliley
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Provision subtype	Children's home

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Service information

Brief description of the service

This home is operated by a charitable organisation, under contract to a local authority. It is registered for up to six children and young people with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties, physical disabilities and learning disabilities. The home provides two different services within the same building. Short breaks are available for young people over weekends and school holidays. Boarding placements are also available, so that during the school term the home provides care and accommodation to young people attending linked special schools.

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**.

This is a good home and the outcomes achieved by young people are outstanding.

This home provides highly personalised and well planned care to young people with a range of complex care needs. As a result young people make tremendous progress in many areas of their lives; improving social skills, developing independent living skills, attending and achieving at school and developing self-confidence. This represents a massive improvement from their starting points and leads to them being able to manage successful transitions from this home when the time comes for them to move on.

Staff have very high aspirations for all young people. This includes ensuring that they are involved in the running of the home and have as much say as possible in decisions made about their lives on a daily basis. This is enabled through the consistent, imaginative use of a range of communication tools. This ensures that young people can have their say, make their views known and air their opinions whatever their preferred method of communication.

This dedicated, patient, child-centred approach from staff has helped young people to develop very strong relationships with the staff in the home. Young people say that they get on very well with staff and that staff are very good at looking after

them. This is echoed by parents who comment that 'They're great at working through issues with children' and 'They have provided a better service than I had hoped.' Young people are very happy living in this home and are kept safe by staff following a range of health and safety policies and protocols.

The Registered Manager is committed to providing the highest quality of service to young people and leads her team well in an energetic, resourceful and hands on manner, and provides the necessary support and guidance through regular supervision and training. She is aware of the strengths and weaknesses of her team and her home and has a clear development plan in place to ensure that the home continues to progress.

Shortfalls were noted in respect of the administration of medication; both in terms of ensuring medication brought in to the home is administered correctly and that prescription medication is always given in line with the prescription. Additionally there were gaps relating to the completeness of restraint records and external monitoring visits to the home have not included consultation with parents. Minor shortfalls were noted in respect of the robustness of monitoring by the Registered Manager and in ensuring that all entries in records, especially restraint records, are clearly expressed.

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
17B (2001)	ensure that within 24 hours of the use of any measure of control, restraint or discipline that a written record is made in a volume kept for that purpose which shall include details of the child's behaviour leading up to the use of the measure and confirmation the authorised person has spoken to the person using the measure about the use of the measure (Reg 17 (B) (3) (b) (h))	30/11/2013
21 (2001)	ensure that there are suitable arrangements in place for the safe administration of any medicines received into the children's home (Reg 21 (1))	31/10/2013
21 (2001)	ensure that any medicine which is prescribed for a child is administered as prescribed (Reg 21 (2) (b))	31/10/2013
33 (2001)	ensure that the person carrying out the visit shall interview, with their consent and in private, such of the children accommodated there, their parents, relatives and person's working at the home as appears necessary in order to form an opinion of the standard of care provided in the home. (Reg 33	31/10/2013

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Recommendations

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

- ensure that all staff's work is consistent with regulations, national minimum standards and the homes own policies and procedures; this specifically relates to carrying out weekly fire alarm tests and fully completing restraint records (NMS 21.3)
- ensure that entries in records are legible, clearly expressed, non-stigmatising and distinguish as far as possible between fact, opinion and third party information. (NMS 22.4)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **outstanding**.

Young people make huge progress while living in this home. This is in terms of life skills, educational attendance and achievement, managing their own behaviour, social skills and interaction, voicing their needs and self-confidence.

Young people develop strategies for taking responsibility for their own health needs according to their individual abilities. Young people are actively involved in planning menus and through growing a range of vegetables on their new allotment have become much more willing to try a range of fresh fruit and vegetables. Young people are encouraged to develop self-care skills and a strong commitment to improving personal hygiene has also had a positive impact on young people's general health.

All young people are in full time education and attendance levels are excellent. The home has extremely good links with the school young people attend and a comprehensive communications system ensures a joined up approach to working with young people. Transport arrangements to school, with consistent drivers and escorts, ensures a smooth transition at either end of the school day. This supports young people to manage the change from one environment to another with the minimum of disruption or distress. This approach ensures that young people, especially those who had not previously accessed education, attend and achieve as fully as possible in their educational placements.

Young people make a very positive contribution to the home including planning menus, suggesting activities, welcoming visitors and showing them around, appropriately supported by staff. The home have been very proactive in gaining young people thoughts, feelings and views, using a wide range of communication tools. This ensures that all young people are supported to use their preferred communication methods to express their likes and dislikes and their wants and needs

confidently and secure in the knowledge staff will understand and respond to them. Young people are also actively involved in fund raising events and a recent coffee morning raised a significant amount of money towards refitting the well-used sensory room in the home.

Taking some responsibility for their own health needs, doing well at school and being involved in the way the home is running have a huge impact on young people's self-worth. Through active participation in these areas young people make exceptional progress in their understanding of situations and in their own abilities. This leads to them growing in self-confidence and developing a very positive level of self-esteem. Staff comment on some young people being 'more able than others which is really helping confidence and self-esteem as they role model behaviours and support others through appropriate teenage friendships'. This dynamic is supporting young people to interact appropriately in a range of social settings and to enjoy participation in group activities.

Young people develop life skills and independence skills through following highly individualised plans. This results in them making tremendous progress in a range of areas; developing and maintaining clear personal hygiene routines, hoovering their bedrooms, helping to do their laundry, laying and clearing the table, washing and drying up and helping staff with shopping and preparing meals. Parents comment that 'They have been working really hard to help him gain some independence and to develop life skills. He has achieved a lot while with them and he loves it there.' These skills and the unstinting support of staff and dedicated transition workers ensure young people are able to make seamless transitions from this home to their next placement.

Quality of care

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

Young people have very strong relationships with the staff team. Staff are extremely patient, knowledgeable and supportive of young people in all aspects of their day to day living. Young people are very happy to spend time with staff, talk to them about a whole range of issues from their day and know the structures and routines in place within the home very well. This is extremely well supported through the use of a range of communication tools such as PECS symbols, talking mats and the use of 'Signalong' a specialist sign language for use with young people with learning difficulties. The continued development and implementation of communication methods is led by a dedicated staff member who has undertaken additional training in this area. This ensures staff are better able to understand young people's experiences and needs and are able to respond to these appropriately. Young people are able to share their feelings with staff through group meetings and 1:1 sessions. Young people say 'one to one sessions are a good idea and I enjoy them'. Group meeting minutes utilise all communication methods available to staff and young people. Minutes are typed by staff and young people stick PECS symbols to the minutes to illustrate the narrative. This ensures young people are fully involved in this process and are aware that their views and feelings are seen as very important

by staff.

The complaints procedure has been produced in a range of formats to ensure that it is accessible to all young people whatever their level of communication skills. Young people say they know how to make a complaint but say they have not done so and that they are very happy in the home.

Young people living in this home have very complex care needs. High quality, individualised care plans ensure that all staff fully understand young people's needs and how these can best be met. With regard to short breaks these plans are used to ensure, as fully as possible, that young people with compatible needs and similar interests are staying in the home at any one time. Very comprehensive placement plans detail all aspects of an individual's needs including health, support with feeding, preferred communication method and any cultural and religious considerations. These plans are regularly reviewed by staff in placement meetings and through discussion in team meetings. Young people are supported to be involved in their meetings, where possible, or their views are sought by staff before they attend meetings in which staff act as advocates on behalf of the young people. Reports prepared by the home for looked after children and educational reviews are of a very high standard and clearly demonstrate the progress being made by young people through being in this home. This progress is also recognised by parents who made comments such as 'I very quickly noticed a positive difference in my child when he started going there, they have provided a better service than I had hoped and I am more than happy with the way they are working with him.'

The home provides a very healthy environment including ensuring a healthy balanced diet is provided and that young people take part in a range of activities designed to support their health needs. There are clear procedures in place for the receipt, administration and discharge of medication from the home. Despite staff having read these and being aware of the importance of the correct administration of medication there have been three issues of this being incorrectly followed since the last inspection. This has involved some missed medication and the administration of medication without correctly following the new prescription. The nature of this wrongly administered prescription medication could also have had a potential safeguarding impact should the young person have had a seizure while on an activity outside the home. These issues have been robustly followed up with parents and social workers being informed, advice being sought from health professionals and through supervision and additional training. The home also works proactively with other agencies such as Doctors when required and counsellors to ensure the physical and psychological health needs of young people are met.

Staff are very proactive in supporting young people's education. Links with school are very close and there are clear information sharing systems in place. Signs around the home reflect those used at school so young people benefit from a consistent approach being used in their care and behaviour management. Staff were observed supporting a young person to settle on school transport indicating the joined up work being done by staff with other colleagues and demonstrating the commitment they have to ensuring young people attend education.

This home is very well maintained and provides lots of space in numerous themed rooms. This allows young people to be able to take time away from the group, allows for a number of different activities to take place concurrently and provides exactly the right level of different stimuli for young people. There is a garden area which has a dedicated sensory garden as well as a trampoline and football area. The allotment is located in the grounds of the building next door ensuring young people have easy access to this and can work on it regularly which they really enjoy.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people say that they feel safe in this home. High staffing ratios support this and the range of health and safety checks in place ensure the environment is kept safe and secure at all times. The home has acted to respond to issues raised at the last fire officer visit and ensure that all young people practice the fire drill regularly. Young people were able to walk me through the fire evacuation process showing they fully understand what they are expected to do should the alarm go off unexpectedly. For less mobile young people personal emergency evacuation plans are in place to ensure the home would be completely evacuated in a safe manner should there be a fire. The only minor shortfall in this area is in the completion of weekly fire alarm tests which have been missed on two occasions. This could potentially lead to a heightened level of risk to young people, especially those with mobility issues.

Young people do not go missing from this home. There is a protocol in place which refers to police procedures. Policies are very clear on what action staff should take should a young person go missing, with a heightened response due to their levels of vulnerability. This ensures staff would respond appropriately and in a timely manner should a young person go missing from the home in order to ensure their quick and safe return.

There have been nine sanctions since the last inspection. This low number indicates that young people have developed ways of managing their behaviour appropriately ensuring staff do not need to sanction them for their behaviour. There have been five incidents of restraint since the last inspection. These do not clearly record the behaviour being exhibited leading to the restraint and on one occasion there is no evidence of a staff debrief having taken place. There are also gaps in staff completing all details of restraint records as required by the home's own policies and procedures. All restraints relate to one young person and appropriate touch through low level intervention is a clear strategy outlined in his behaviour management plan. This has led to staff make brief entries in the restraint record such as 'to calm and return to bedroom'. This is open to interpretation and could be easily construed as restraint to ensure compliance. Clearly expressed records allow other staff and young people, should they choose to look at their files, to understand why the restraint took place. All necessary information is recorded in great detail on incident reports but there is insufficient required information recorded in the restraint log.

There have been no new staff recruited to the home since the last inspection. One volunteer is used and they go through a very similar process to staff in terms of rigorous vetting checks before they can work in the home. The visitors book is also used without fail and visitors are chaperoned when young people are in the building. This ensures young people are protected from the risk of harm or abuse from adults who work with them or who visit the home.

There has been one issue involving an allegation of poor care practice. This has been referred to the Local Authority Designated Officer and Ofsted in line with expectations on the Registered Manager. Staff spoken to were very clear with regard to their role and responsibilities should an allegation or disclosure be made to them. This ensures young people will be supported, kept safe and protected from harm by a well-trained and knowledgeable staff team should they make or be the subject of an allegation or disclosure.

Leadership and management

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

This home is well managed and the Registered Manager is very clear that providing high quality care is her priority and the focus of her staff team. The staffing ratios are high, staff receive regular supervision and training is all in line with the organisational requirements. However, there are some discrepancies in the monitoring being carried out. This includes an overly simplified method of checking the frequency of fire alarm checks which does not ensure they are carried out weekly as the homes policy stipulates. Restraint records have been signed off, though some have gaps in the homes recording procedures. One does not include a staff debrief and at least one includes comments which are open to interpretation. The managers monthly checks are being carried out very regularly and comprehensive reports compiled but these issues have not been picked up. External monitoring of the home is also carried out on a monthly basis and includes discussions with staff and young people. However, there has been no contact with parents of current residents for several months; this would ensure that a fully rounded view of the quality of care being provided could be gained.

There were no requirements or recommendations made at the last inspection. However the Registered Manager has ensured the home has continued to improve the service it provides. This has been focussed around using money raised through a series of fundraising events to improve the overall environment for young people. The garden and allotment has been developed, there are clear plans in place for the redevelopment of the sensory room and staff and young people have started to do yoga. This has ensured young have a range of appropriate and varied sensory stimuli and access to an enjoyable way of relaxing when they are uptight or anxious.

The statement of purpose in place for this home provides very clear information

about the services the home intends to provide. Parents have seen this document and say they were very well informed before their child moved in and this continues to be the case while he lives there. They are also clear that any pre-placement worries they may have had were dispelled through reading the statement of purpose and visiting the home and that they now have no concerns at all.

The Registered Manager is very aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the home. Strengths include; the mix of the staff team in terms of age, experience and cultural backgrounds, the training available to staff, the stability of the staff team, the diversity evenings run by the staff and displayed diversity wall and the guides produced by staff for volunteers and students on placement around working with such complex needs as autism, Down's syndrome and Angelmans Syndrome. These ensure new and less experienced staff have a good overview of the needs and personality traits of the young people they will be working with. Comparative weaknesses are perceived around the need for a new hallway carpet and the fact that all bedrooms are upstairs when it may have been beneficial for one to be on the ground floor. A development plan is in place to ensure the home continues to move forward and a carpet is planned to be fitted after the winter, a sensible decision given how busy this area of the home is throughout the day. The layout of the home cannot be changed but the clear individual emergency evacuation plans in place mean this potentially heightened risk is being very robustly addressed. Other areas on the development plan include occupancy rates and planned activities for short break services during school holidays and the development of the sensory room. These plans will ensure a high quality service continues to be available for all young people who use this home.

Young people benefit from a staffing ratio of 1:1 which ensures their needs can be fully met. Staff on duty at any one time are well trained and suitably qualified. All staff undertake mandatory training; safeguarding, first aid, fire safety, food hygiene, behaviour management, administration of medication, as part of their induction or very early in their employment. These courses are then updated as and when required ensuring staff training remains current and relevant. All staff receive regular supervision and an appraisal system is in place and all staff are currently going through this process. This ensures staff receive the right level of support and guidance to ensure they continue to carry out their roles as well as possible and that any issues they may have can be appropriately addressed.

With the exception of the unclear information in restraint records young people's records are very detailed and cover a vast range of areas to ensure all aspects of their life in the home is recorded. This will allow them to reflect on their time in the home and the progress they have made should they look back on their files in the future. Young people's achievements are recorded photographically. These are held on their files and copies are sent to parents. This ensures all young people can enjoy their achievements and parents can see the progress they are making while living in the home.

There has been one notification sent through to Ofsted by the Registered Manager since the last inspection. This shows she is fully aware of when information needs to

be shared with external professionals such as Ofsted or children's safeguarding boards and also ensures that Ofsted, as a regulator, maintains an overview of what is happening in the home. There have been no complaints received and this ties in with this being a well managed and well run service.

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.