

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	08/08/2012
Inspector	Deborah White / Leonard Hird
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	08/03/2012
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This children's home provides care and accommodation for four children who have autism and learning disabilities. The home is operated by a private provider.

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 home provides a good quality of care with individual plans for each child that identify children's needs and how these will be met. Children are progressing and achieving and school attendance is good. Children are happy living at the home and have positive relationships with staff. Feedback for this inspection is positive and parents and social workers feel the home is a good place for children to live.

Children are safe and feel safe. Behaviour is managed positively and good risk management protects children from known risks. Medication is handled safely and children are fit and healthy. Staff contribute to the care and development of each child and receive the training they need to promote child's welfare.

Staff are committed to the home and the care of the children, however, not all staff feel fully supported or that their formal supervision is meaningful.

Not all children receive the services they need to make a smooth transition into adulthood. Children's case files do not include all the information they should to ensure each child's history is available in the children's home.

Leadership and management arrangements are not as organised as they should be and this has resulted in some slippage in the performance of the home. Staff shortages and the absence of the manager is putting pressure on the home's organisation. Additionally, not all outcomes from the home's monitoring are being addressed in a timely manner to demonstrate the home is fully managing identified shortfalls and there are records missing regarding staff safety checks.

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
11 (2001)	ensure that the children's home is conducted so as to make proper provision for the care of children, specifically in relation to children moving into adulthood (Regulation 11 (1) (b))	30/09/2012
28 (2001)	maintain in respect of each child who is accommodated at the home a record in a permanent form of the information specified in Schedule 3 and that records are kept securely in the home so long as the child is accommodated there. (Regulation 28 (1) (a) and (3) (b))	30/09/2012

Recommendations

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

- ensure the children's home has a record of the recruitment and vetting checks which have been carried out on those working in the home as listed in this standard (NMS 16.3)
- ensure the children's home is managed effectively and efficiently (NMS 21)
- ensure there are contingency plans in place in the event of a shortfall in staffing levels (NMS 17.3)
- ensure staff have access to meaningful support and advice as part of their regular supervision (NMS 19.4)
- ensure immediate action is taken to address any issues raised by the home's monitoring. (NMS 21.2)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Children are confident, relaxed and settled in their home. Children can access all areas of the home independently and are comfortable and relaxed in their environment. A child signalled that they like living in the home and that they are happy with their bedroom. A parent said 'I have no problems at all with the home. My child is very happy, the staff are flexible and work with my child. The home is

very nice and my child is doing more than I ever expected'.

Children's health needs are met and children have access to the services they need. Children enjoy a healthy lifestyle that includes a healthy diet and lots of exercise and outdoor activities. Children have access to a range of specialist services that are provided by the owners of the children's home. This means children receive a quick response to any changes in their needs; specifically in relation to their autism. An Independent Reviewing Officer said 'My child is progressing very well and their outcomes are good. The social worker and parents are very happy. This is a positive placement and I can only say positive things about the home'.

Children enjoy a wide range of meaningful activities that meet their leisure and social needs. Activities are based on individual children's likes and capabilities. Children are very much included in their local community and enjoy attending a variety of leisure centres, local parks and leisure facilities and youth clubs. A parent said 'My child does more now than they ever did at home. The staff really think about where my child likes to go, they work at my child's pace'. All children have 100% attendance at school and are achieving their maximum potential.

Children have progressed significantly from their starting point and there has been further progress since the last inspection. Children are learning and developing independence skills to help prepare them for adulthood. Each child is carefully assessed to ensure they can attain the goals set to ensure they achieve and feel good about themselves and their development. A staff member said 'We work a lot with the children to promote their independence. It is important for our children to be as prepared as they can be. The children are doing so well. They are all in a good place, they are happy'.

There are lots of photographs of the children progressing and enjoying new experiences. This helps children recognise how well they are doing. The photographs are put in personalised albums to provide each child with a life story that children can keep when they move on from the home. This gives children a feeling of their own identity and a picture history they can carry with them throughout their lives.

Not all children have made a smooth transition into adulthood to ensure they are supported to receive the services they need, and are entitled to, from statutory leaving care services. A child does not have a pathway plan in place and has not had access to a young person's advisor to fully assess their needs during the transition from children's to adult services.

The home have assessed the child's needs and put in place some independence strategies but these have not been agreed with the child's placing authority or an Independent Reviewing Officer. This means the child's rights have not been fully promoted to ensure they receive the same care and support that every looked after child should receive during their transition period.

Quality of care

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

Staff promote and develop very good relationships with children to provide children with a safe and an emotionally secure environment. Children relate positively to the adults who care for them and have made appropriate attachments and bonds, which gives children self-confidence and stability. Each child is part of the resident social group, which helps children learn and develop good social skills within their peer group.

Care planning is comprehensive and based on children's assessed needs. Staff know what is recorded in each child's residential plan and contribute towards the children's day-to-day arrangements. Staff are knowledgeable about autism and this is reflected in how they relate to the children in a positive, proactive way. Staff regularly liaise with other specialists such as speech and language and occupational therapists to seek advice and guidance to continually assess and develop their knowledge and practice.

Children live in a safe environment that meets their needs. The home is spacious and provides ample room for children's private time and socialisation. Each child has their own room that they can decorate to reflect their individuality. Any restrictions placed on children, for example, securing external doors, are implemented as a safeguarding measure and are agreed with each child's placing authority. Utilities and services are regularly monitored and checked to ensure they are safe and functional.

The systems in place to safely administer medication to children are very good. All staff are trained in the safe handling of medication and know the home's medication procedures. Detailed records are kept of all medicines received into the home and disposed of. This prevents any potential abuse or misuse of prescribed drugs. Medication administration sheets are completed in full to ensure children receive the medication they need as it has been prescribed by a doctor or medical consultant.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Children are and feel safe. There is no bullying in the home and no children have gone missing. Staff know the home's child protection procedures and receive regular practice updates about how to keep children and young adults safe. Robust risk management ensures staff know children's known risks and risk taking behaviour and how risks will be minimised. A parent said 'My child is very safe, I have no worries about safety in the home'.

Behaviour is managed positively and restraints are only used as a last resort. The home promotes a proactive approach to managing difficult and challenging behaviours to prevent children reaching a crisis point where a physical intervention may be needed. Safeguarding records show why each restraint has taken place and what measures were taken to avoid using the measure so that staff can monitor

incidents and reflect if future incidents can be avoided. The home does not use sanctions as a means to manage behaviour.

All visitors to the home are checked and vetted so children do not have access to adults they do not know. Staff recruitment procedures include measures to carry out safety checks on all new starters. However, staff records kept in the home do not fully detail all recruitment checks to allow for regular monitoring to ensure checks have been completed and are current.

Leadership and management

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

There are measures in place for staff to deputise in the absence of the manager but these do not take into account how the home will be managed where the manager is absent for a longer than expected period of time. As a result, the current management arrangements are not robust enough to ensure the continuing efficiency of the home's operation and management.

Senior staff at the home have tried to keep up with the home's administration and management in the absence of the manager but they have not been given additional hours to complete the many tasks needed to meet the home's Statement of Purpose and outcomes for children. Where this has not as yet had a direct impact on children's welfare, should the situation continue there is a risk that standards will drop and staff will become tired and overworked.

Staffing vacancies have also contributed to the staff team being pulled between covering shifts to look after the children and putting aside managerial time. The staff team have over a period of at least four weeks worked a number of additional hours, which is putting a strain on the home's staffing resources. Staff have raised staffing shortages as an issue and the home's monitoring systems have identified a potential problem should staff shortages continue, but at the time of the inspection there are no agreed additional supportive measure in place.

Staff feel supported and are committed to the care and well-being of the children and the children's home. Staff feel they are a strong team who support each other and put children first. Staff receive regular formal supervision but some staff feel this is not always meaningful. Records confirm that not all supervision sessions fully discuss the needs and care of all the children or how staff can talk about and reflect on their day-to-day practice.

The systems in place to monitor the home are robust. The provider takes the monitoring of the services they provide seriously and have introduced additional systems and audits to complement the Regulation 33 and Regulation 34 monitoring. The measures include a safeguarding audit that is undertaken each month by a senior manager. The audit reviews all safeguarding incidents and the recording of events. An action plan is generated from each audit and this records the actions needed to be taken by the manager to improve outcomes and the home's

performance.

The provider also carries out a mock inspection every three months. The format of this inspection is the same as the inspection frameworks used by Ofsted. The mock inspections are thorough and clearly identify where the home is not compliant with the framework's grade descriptors and evaluation schedule. As with the safeguarding audit, a detailed action plan is provided to the home to address shortfalls in care and practice.

The monitoring systems have previously been very effective however, at this inspection the home have not responded to address shortfalls in a timely manner. For example, three consecutive Regulation 33 reports identify recording errors and these have not been addressed. Also, three safeguarding reports are not available in the home and therefore actions arising from these audits have not been dealt with by staff in the home.

There is evidence that some progress has been made to improve the home's performance and outcomes for children. The requirement from the last inspection is met and the home has in place a development plan, which clearly projects how the service will evolve in line with changes to the organisation and developments in managing children who are on the autistic spectrum.

Not all children's records are clear, up to date or stored securely. All children's case files were inspected during this visit and there is important information missing from the files, which is not available in the home. For example, the files inspected hold information dated from 2011 to the present time. Any information prior to 2011 has been archived and staff are not sure where the records are kept. These records include looked after children documentation; contact with children's social workers and children's care and placement plans.

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.