

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Elaine Cray
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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

This privately owned home is registered to accommodate eight children and young people with learning disabilities. The home has a school and offers planned short and long-term placements. The school is registered with the Department for Education.

Overall effectiveness

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

This is a new and developing service where children and young people are making meaningful relationships, trying new opportunities and making satisfactory progress. Their behaviour, health, education, social and safeguarding needs are supported.

The child focused ethos of the service and good levels of respect for their individuality ensure that children and young people are nurtured and they receive personalised care. Staff are committed to providing children and young people with challenges and opportunities to develop new skills both socially and educationally. Children and young people are treated with a good level of respect and efforts are made to ensure their wishes, feelings and views are heard and included in their day-to-day routines.

Safeguarding is placed in high priority. Effective risk assessment, high staffing levels and liaison with families and placing authorities contribute to the safety of children and young people living at the service.

Children and young people are consistently supported to attend and enjoy school. There is a strong commitment to enable them to overcome anxieties about attending and that achievements are celebrated.

The management and staff team have experienced a significant period of change during the early development of this service. There is a clear dedication to developing a cohesive staff team and every effort has been made to maintain a stable and secure home for young people.

There are clear external monitoring processes for the running of the home. The Registered Manager and senior management team embrace and value the need for a clear focus on quality assurance. Steps to address some of the service's shortfalls are already in hand, including new and reviewed managerial roles and responsibilities. The senior management team are keen to produce a development plan in order to address shortfalls and manage improvements in the running of the service and outcomes for children and young people.

There are five statutory requirements and seven recommendation set as a result of this inspection

that relate to some of the home's records, food provided, the dining room facilities, staff training and supervision, fire risk assessments, missing from care procedures, contact arrangements and the monitoring of placement plans and other records.

Areas for improvementStatutory 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 the written record kept for recording measures of control, restraint and discipline meet the requirements set out in Regulation (Regulation 17B (3))	25/11/2011
13 (2001)	ensure children are provided with food which is suitable for their needs, meets their reasonable preferences and is sufficiently varied (Regulation 13.1 (a))	25/11/2011
31 (2001)	ensure the children's home is adequately furnished with adequate living and communal space to meet the needs of the children accommodated, this is with particular regard to the dining room facilities (Regulation 31.4)	25/11/2011
27 (2001)	ensure all staff receive appropriate training, supervision and appraisal. This is with particular regard to all staff having appropriate sign language skills and completing safeguarding children training (Regulation 27.4 (a))	30/12/2011
32 (2001)	take adequate precautions against the risk of fire, this is with particular regard to providing an up to date fire risk assessment of the children's home. (Regulation 32.1 (a))	25/11/2011

Recommendations

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

- ensure children's views, wishes and feelings are acted upon, in the day-to-day running of and development of the home (NMS 1.1 and 1.7)
- ensure the home's missing from care procedures are compatible with and have regard to the local authority's 'Runaway and Missing from Home and Care' protocols (NMS 5.6)
- ensure the registered person works with the responsible authority to give consideration to how the child's contact with family and significant others will be supported (NMS 9.6)

- ensure staff understand what decisions about contact are delegated to them, in line with the child's care and placement plans (NMS 9.7)
- ensure the process for the monitoring of the records kept by the home identify any concerns about specific incidents and identify patterns and trends and immediate action is taken to address any issues raised by this monitoring (NMS 21.2)
- ensure each child's placement plan is monitored by a key worker within the home who ensures that the requirements of the plan are implemented in the day-to-day care of that child (NMS 25.2).
- ensure staff are trained in the use of physical restraint techniques and training is regularly refreshed. (NMS 3.15)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Children and young people have settled in their new placements and are becoming more established in this new and developing service. They make satisfactory progress, enjoying new opportunities and maintaining good attendance at school. Children and young people are treated with respect; they thrive because staff are consistently concerned for their welfare. Parents' comments about the service include 'just brill' and state children and young people are given 'a good quality of life'.

Children and young people develop a positive self view because they learn new skills and are given support to try activities. Children and young people learn in an environment where they are supported by care staff in education activities. Their achievements, efforts and individuality are clearly promoted, reinforced and rewarded at school. One parent states children and young people do well because 'education is tailored to each child's needs'. They are able to take more responsibility for their daily routines. For example, children and young people help care for and feed the small animals, some can now use cutlery and try different foods and all show significant pleasure in going to school.

Children and young people are encouraged to express their views, feelings and wishes. Staff know about and respect the children and young people's individual likes, dislikes, personalities and communication processes. Children and young people are provided with clear symbol and photograph communication systems. However, they are yet to benefit from a clear and consistently-implemented sign language communication strategy. While children and young people respond to the structured daily living routines in the home, the lack of clarity regarding how all staff communicate impacts on their confidence and understanding of these routines, activities and expectations. Children and young people enjoy positive relationships with staff and this is demonstrated by chatting, smiling, laughing and making meaningful eye contact.

Children and young people are able to develop a positive sense of worth because

their achievements and positive experiences are celebrated and reinforced. They are congratulated and praised for all their efforts and contributions. They enjoy an array of photos of their experiences, activities and achievements which are displayed in the home and maintained in their personal files. Children and young people enjoy a variety of practical and leisure activities. There are various photos showing them swimming, going on trips, spending time with family and enjoying the play facilities in the grounds of the home. Children and young people communicated they are happy when they can use the trampoline, go on the swing and can run around in the grounds. Some young people say they enjoy going for rides in the car.

Children and young people look forward to and enjoy contact with their families both at the service and when they go home.

Children and young people maintain good health because staff know about the children's and young people's learning disabilities and how these impact on their health. Their medical needs are well-met and supported with clear procedures for medication. Children and young people are encouraged to develop their own understanding of their health. For example, practicing cleaning their own teeth, healthy eating, doing exercise and developing confidence about going on appointments to the dentist. While children and young people receive education about healthy eating and try new foods some of the menu choices do not consistently promote healthy choices and eating. Intended targets for weight management for some children and young people have not been met.

Quality of care

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

Children and young people's care and support is managed with a clear and child-focused framework for care, education and behaviour management. Care planning, risk management procedures and behaviour management plans provide a comprehensive assessment of need. Children and young people receive good support because the plans guide staff with practical strategies to support the daily routines and respond to complex needs. Individual care and educational plans set achievable targets, meaningful challenges and help young people feel good about themselves.

Parents' surveys report satisfaction with the quality of care in the home and relationships with staff. Social workers also report that young people are happy at the home and progress. However, some objectives in the children and young people's care plans are not consistently implemented, either as agreed in conjunction with families or in a timely manner. Consequently the monitoring and review of each young person's placement plan does not always contribute to the expected level of support in order to achieve more long term goals.

Children and young people are cared for in a structured and nurturing environment. Staff have a sensitive and meaningful knowledge of the personalities and preferences of the children and young people. They understand and respect how children and young people like things to happen and be done. The managers and staff maintain a

clear and dedicated commitment to developing meaningful and stable relationships with children, young people and their families. Children and young people's contact details are in place and encouraged. However, arrangements are not always effectively communicated, recorded and therefore implemented; including face to face work with key workers and families as outlined and agreed in placement care plans.

Children and young people progress because staff implement clear expectations and boundaries, coupled with developing and maintaining meaningful and respectful relationships with children and young people. Identifying individuality and difference is part of how individual children and young people are valued by the staff. This knowledge is key to understanding young people's needs, behaviour and how they express themselves. However, some staff do not have the same sign language skills and have not received training. This shortfall impacts on the extent to how all children and young people are enabled to meaningfully participate in daily living tasks. Additionally children and young people's participation in future placements and fulfilling their potential are potentially compromised if they do not have a clear and accepted mode of communication.

All children and young people attend the school attached to the home. The routines in the house including bedtimes, getting up and staffing levels are arranged in order to promote education. Staffing levels are arranged to ensure children and young people enjoy a variety of activities and leisure opportunities. Children and young people's attendance and achievement at school is supported with good working relationships between the carers and education staff.

Staff have an understanding of how each child and young person expresses how they are happy, sad, anxious or distressed and this is reinforced in written placement plans. The picture and symbol system is an integral part of the children and young people's complaints resource pack and therefore useful in enabling them to understand they have a right to raise concerns about their care. There are no specific processes for children and young people to express views or be part of decisions about how the house is run on a day-to-day basis

Young people's physical and emotional health is promoted and monitored with detailed health plans. The manager and staff have knowledge of learning disabilities, associated medical issues and encourage health promotion awareness within education. There are safe procedures for the administration of medication. Information regarding how to best manage the covert administration of medication in foods and drinks has been updated. The planned and documented menus present a balanced range of food, including fresh fruit and vegetables. However, while staff promote choice for young people they do not always intervene when young people make persistent poor choices about what they eat. For example, some young people do not keep to a weight reduction diet and some consume a high level of sugary foods.

Children and young people live in a well maintained home, designed to meet their needs. Young enjoy the privacy of their own rooms, where they can choose the

colour of décor, soft furnishings and express their individuality with personal items. The house is homely with photos, pictures and ornaments. More fragile and electrical items are placed in protective cabinets so children and young people can enjoy the usual household items and gadgets without the risk of harm. There is a choice of communal areas, including two lounges, two dining areas and sensory room. However, there is not enough dining space to facilitate mealtimes for all young people at the same time when the service is operating at full occupancy.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Children and young people are protected by effective safeguarding arrangements. There are robust recruitment and selection processes and all visitors to the service are closely scrutinised and checked. Staff are able to promote the safety and welfare of children and young people because they understand the complexities of their disabilities, behaviours and communication processes.

Staff are supported with access to clear policies and procedures including safeguarding children, what to do should children go missing and clear fire procedures. However, some staff are yet to complete training to reinforce and inform consistent practice in the home.

Staff are aware of their own roles and responsibilities and other agencies involved in keeping children and young people safe. The service maintains links with the local safeguarding team, placing social workers and families with regard to managing information and concerns. While there have been no incidents of children and young people going missing from the service there are clear procedures in place. However, these procedures are yet to be cross referenced to the local authorities 'Runaway and Missing from Home and Care protocols'.

Children and young people are safe and enjoy improved behaviour because risk assessment and behaviour management plans are supported by staff. The clear behaviour management procedures are yet to be fully implemented as some staff are yet to complete physical intervention training. However, staffing arrangements do ensure there are enough trained staff on duty should the use of physical restraint be required. Staffing levels are high, there are clear routines to ensure all children and young people are supervised and observed. Risks are identified and clear and practical management strategies put in place. Concerns and challenges are clearly identified. Strategies to manage these concerns focus on safety but also ensure children and young people have opportunities to explore their potential and achieve.

Records show physical restraint is only used as a last resort. Staff use a variety of approaches to manage challenging behaviours. Records relating to the use of sanctions and physical restraint demonstrate a strong sense of accountability for the reasons for such interventions. However, information does not include the full requirements for these central records. Documentation is regularly monitored in

order to identify trends in behaviour, assess the effectiveness of strategies and the progress made by young people.

High staffing levels, close supervision and clear expectations ensure behaviour is managed with no concerns about bullying. Children and young people say there are some children and young people who may push. They say staff make sure everyone gets out of the way and the staff always stay with them so they are safe.

Children and young people are cared for in a safe environment. There are health and safety checks and monitoring systems in place. However, some staff and managerial absence has led to some shortfalls, including a delay in the annual review of the home's fire risk assessment. Security is thorough and well monitored.

Leadership and management

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

This is the home's first full inspection. The service has been operational for six months rising to half occupancy of four children within the last two months. The recent increase in children and young people led to an increase in recruitment of new staff. However, these developments coincided with some management and staff sickness. This combination of events has resulted in some instability in the organisation of staffing arrangements and shortfalls in staff training.

Despite these difficulties the home does well in providing children and young people with a foundation of stable, safe and nurturing care and support. The staff team presents a high level of dedication to meeting the needs of the children and young people. They also understand and promote the aims and objectives of the home's Statement of Purpose.

The Registered Manager is also the head teacher for the school and has had to respond to extensive challenges. Additionally a key member of the management team has been absent, placing new pressures and responsibilities on the senior management team. There is a core group of experienced staff working in the home. This initial staff team covered training in safeguarding children, behaviour management, health and safety and fire procedures. This clear strategy to organising training has been interrupted with newly recruited staff.

Staff say they receive good support from the management team, who are very involved in the care of the children and young people. They feel the staff team has good cohesion and can approach the management team with any concerns. All staff have completed the service's induction package, some have completed or are in the process of completing the induction foundation. Some experienced staff have a National Vocational Qualification at level 3.

The management team are aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the home. The lack of strategic management of the home has been acknowledged by the manager and owner of the service. Roles and responsibilities within the management

team have been re-defined with new job descriptions. An additional position of care coordinator has been added to the team in order to cover the day-to-day management and development of the children's home. There is also an acknowledgement by the Registered Manager for a greater degree of delegation. Staff training is now a priority including all staff completing an e-learning course in safeguarding children, team training in physical intervention and thorough health and safety training. There is a strong commitment to staff development, including the re-establishment of regular staff supervision. All these plans and actions are yet to be documented in a development plan for the service.

External monitoring of the service identifies good practice, shortfalls and further areas for development. The manager carries out monthly checks on records in the home. The senior management team acknowledges that these checks are yet to have a more strategic and organised approach in order to impact on the quality and development of care in the service. There is a clear commitment to improvement and this is demonstrated by the recent developments in the senior management team and delegation of roles and responsibilities within the staff team.

Equality and diversity practice is **satisfactory**.