

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Carole Moore
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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.

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**.

Young people receive good standards of personalised care in this home. Staff place the young person's well-being at the centre of their practice and are able to demonstrate a good understanding of the individual needs of the young people. Most of the young people do not use verbal communication and the staff communicate with them using a wide range of pictorial tools. Young people are very involved in using these tools. Young people's individual needs are well met, and young people achieve good positive outcomes.

The home provides a comfortable and spacious environment for young people with extensive and attractive outside facilities. Young people are kept safe from harm by protected doors and good policies and procedures. Young people demonstrate by their trusting and relaxed behaviour in the home that they feel safe. Staff underpin this by good quality risk assessments and by their detailed understanding of each young person's moods.

There is a new senior management structure in place and a new manager is in post. She has a clear vision for the development of the home and her new initiatives are being implemented so it is still very much work in progress.

Six recommendations have been made as a result of this inspection. However, these shortfalls have had no impact on the overall good quality of care that young people receive from the staff team and manager.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure children communicate their views on all aspects of their care and support (NMS 1.3)
- ensure the home provides a comfortable and homely environment and is well maintained and decorated. In particular the dining area (NMS 10.3)
- ensure the registered person approves the statement of purpose and reviews it at least annually (NMS13.3)
- ensure the home liaises with the child's responsible authority and their independent reviewing officer where applicable, about the progress of the child's readiness to move to any future accommodation (NMS12.3)
- has a written development plan, reviewed annually, for the future of the home, either identifying any planned changes in the operation or resources of the service, or confirming the continuation of the home's current operation and resource. (NMS15.2)
- ensure all staff have access to support and advice, and are provided with regular supervision by appropriately qualified and experienced staff. (NMS19.4)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people make good progress throughout their time at the home. This is based on the attachments that they are able to make with a motivated and caring staff team that support them. As far as practically possible young people receive guidance to help them understand their circumstances and background. A social worker stated that staff have focussed on areas that are important to their young person such as lowering anxieties and this has really helped with development of independence. Parents have also said, 'Whatever is needed the staff provide and my child's independence has increased.'

Young people's health improves through well organised and consistent approaches to some very complex health needs. Medication has been reduced for some young people and regular reviews are held with professionals to ensure that the most appropriate medication is administered. Also young people's diets have greatly improved with the support from staff and the dietician.

Young people respond positively to the on-site school and benefit from the good support that is offered. The close links between school and the home allow for a consistency of expectations and high awareness of the young people's needs. Achievements in meeting individual targets is well celebrated.

Young people enjoy well supported contact with their families where appropriate. Staff facilitate all the contact arrangements and parents are welcome to visit at any time.

Staff encourage children to enjoy their leisure time. Activities are highly individualised and good use is made of community resources to allow young people to have as many experiences as possible. Young people's activity planners are age appropriate and responsive to their likes and dislikes such as attending church, swimming, horse riding, eating out and walks in the country. Within the home environment young people systematically develop their confidence by having access to stimulating resources and areas such as the sensory garden, swimming pool, whirl pool, looking after a variety of animals and exploring the grounds.

Quality of care

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

The quality of care provided at the home is good. This is achieved through a committed staff team who have a thorough awareness of the differing needs of the young people and how to respond to their complex needs. Staff use a variety of diversionary techniques for young people regarding their behaviours and innovative ways of affecting change in communication and in improving independent lifestyle skills.

Care plans are informative and contain clear information for any new staff. A high level of detail is included within these plans and they clearly show a wide range of information about how the young person would like to be cared for. Care plans link up to other plans, such as education and health plans, to ensure a continuity of care is achieved across the provision. Plans are updated on a regular basis to ensure that the correct information is in place. There are defined targets set and these are measured so as to ensure outcomes for young people continue to improve. For example one social worker said, 'I am really pleased with the progress made. When the young person arrived he had no verbal communication, now he uses sentences.' There is work being implemented to capture the wishes and feelings of young people in order to indicate they have influenced the running of the home but this is currently not in place.

Young people who have reached or almost reached the age of 18 are not currently being prepared for their next transition. Staff are not having the necessary discussions with the child's responsible authority and their independent reviewing officer where applicable, about the progress of the child's readiness to move to any future accommodation. Equally the local authority are not actively pursuing alternative placements. This has the potential to have a detrimental effect on their next placement.

Young people's health care is central to the home. Young people receive effective support to access the health services they need in line with their differing range of

needs and the complexities of their conditions. Suitable arrangements are made for their basic healthcare. For example, annual medicals, dental treatment and routine health visits, as well as more specialised services such as dietary advice, occupational therapy and medication.

The school is on the same site as the home, and most of the young people attend. Staff fully support young people through providing a continuity of care that covers education. Care staff are involved in supporting young people's education and education staff share information with the home relating to the young people's day in education. There is a joined up approach to target setting and this is really helpful in providing a continuity of care. All necessary education meetings are completed to make the most of the educational provision and allow young people to develop as much as possible. Comments such as, 'the young person was really anxious about school when she arrived. However, now she is early in school and happy to be in school.' Those young people who attend alternative education provision are equally well supported.

The site is very well maintained and provides young people with a very pleasant environment to live in. The site's maintenance team responds to issues swiftly. All necessary adaptations are in place depending on the young people's needs. There is a slightly tired look in the dining area which is not as homely as the remainder of the house.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people are protected by robust and effectively implemented safeguarding arrangements. Their well-being is promoted at all times because safeguarding is at the heart of the service. Through surveys, parents have expressed they are confident that the service keeps their young people safe.

All staff are aware of their own roles and responsibilities, and those of other agencies involved in keeping young people safe. The manager and staff are proactive in establishing effective links and working partnerships with the police and the local safeguarding children's team. This liaison results in safeguarding concerns being robustly investigated and addressed. All staff are up to date with their safeguarding training.

No young people have gone missing from the home but should this ever occur the home has excellent systems in place to protect young people. The home follows the local authority's policy on young people missing from care and implements this in accordance with a young person's risk assessment and care plan.

The atmosphere at the home is relaxed. The staff team are calm, skilled and confident in defusing any potentially difficult and challenging situations swiftly and without issue. They are aware of the known triggers and the primary intervention to follow. Staff receive regular training and updates regarding behaviour management.

All staff have a good understanding of individual plans relating specifically to differing behaviours and the strategies in place for responding to these. Young people experience high quality nurturing, warm and positive relationships with staff. This in turn creates effective routines and boundaries and these are well established. Restraint is used as a last resort. However, in the event of a restraint taking place appropriate records are maintained.

The environment is physically safe. Daily checks of systems and equipment as well as risk assessments contribute to the safety of the premises. A high profile is given to fire safety and each young person has a personal evacuation plan to make sure all young people know how to respond in the event of an emergency in order to keep them safe.

Young people are protected with robust recruitment processes. Visitors are checked, vetted and monitored. Good staffing levels further help to keep young people safe and reduce any risk of harm. The organisation's effective recruitment procedures ensure the careful selection, recruitment and retention of staff. New staff are comprehensively vetted prior to their deployment in the home and before having unsupervised access to any young person. This ensures young people are safe and have a staff team who know them well.

Leadership and management

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

Over the past few months there has been a complete change to the management structure. There is a new responsible person, new director and a new manager who has recently completed the registration process. Also a board of governors has just been appointed. Throughout these changes, staff have continued to provide a good service to the young people. The staff team are now able to take more responsibility for their practice which staff confirmed they now feel more involved in how the home is run. The senior team encourage their contribution and ideas about service improvement. The strength of the home is the enthusiastic, competent and consistent staff team that is totally committed to putting the best interests of the young people at the heart of their work, enabling them to provide good care and support.

There have been a number of significant improvements made by the current management team which has had a positive impact on the staff's attitude and practice. One member of staff said; 'It's so good to be able to take some responsibility for practice;' and 'The support from management is a lot better.'

The management team have set high standards of care and aim to continually improve the service. These aspirations are conveyed to the staff team through consistent communication in the variety of team meetings that are held. The management and staff have good working relationships with key professionals in other agencies. One social worker commented; 'Their communication is great.' 'Always have monthly updates.' Monitoring of the service is regular and robust with

both internal and external checks being carried out on a monthly basis. Any shortfalls found during these checks are rectified promptly by the staff team. There is no clear meaningful development plan in place but this is currently being addressed.

Although there have been changes in the composition of the management team, a core team of adults remain who provide continuity of care. There has been some use of agency staff, since the interim inspection. The staff team is well-balanced in terms of age, gender and life experience which provides young people with a richness of experiences and relationships. New staff are familiarised with their role and develop the required skills and competencies through induction training. Most staff are well experienced and suitably qualified. This ensures the delivery of good, safe care.

The registered person has systems in place to notify the appropriate authorities of all significant events relating to the protection of looked after young people and confirming that appropriate action follows any incident.

Staff have a good training programme and all mandatory training is up to date. Some of the supervisions are not at the usual frequency due to the current changes. This could impact on the level of care provided. However, staff have clearly confirmed there is an open door policy and support is always available.

Young people, families and the placing authorities are clear about the support the home provides, and the home meets the aims and objectives detailed in the Statement of Purpose. However, the Statement of Purpose does need to be reviewed in relation to the support provided for post 18 young people. Families speak positively of the home and the range of activities that are provided for young people. One parent said, 'We are always made very welcome at Our Place. It always feels like home from home, happy and friendly.' 'The staff have a very high level of expertise and I am very confident they will bring the best out in my child.' The manager is committed to improving outcomes for young people. The staff have an extensive range of skills and are proficient at identifying the care needs of young people. As a result, young people are supported by staff that are able to meet their needs.

There were no actions raised or recommendations made at the previous inspection visit.

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.