

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	08/10/2013
Inspector	Jennie Christopher / Maire Atherton
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Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	23/01/2013
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This children's home is for seven young people. The home is run by a private organisation, providing care and accommodation for young people with learning disabilities.

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**.

Young people benefit from good relationships with staff and progress in most areas of their lives as a result. Young people are positive about the home and staff and are comfortable in their surroundings. They are supported effectively to overcome barriers and challenges in their lives. Most young people feel listened to and that staff are interested in their emotional and physical well-being. Staff work hard to form good working relationships with parents, carers, education and specialist services, to encourage a cohesive approach to care. Social workers comment that staff remain in consistent communication with them regarding both young people's progress and any concerns they have regarding the young person. Young people benefit from solid relationships with each other and staff in a caring environment with clear boundaries.

The manager has recently been registered and is currently evaluating the current level of service, while implementing some changes. The management team is guiding and motivating the staff group, who feel well supported. Young people are supported to live in a group and respect each other. However, young people's individuality can be compromised through a culture of identifying two groups within the home based on similar communication style, rather than by each individual. Bullying is raised as an occasional concern, though young people feel this managed well by staff. Some young people are actively involved in consultation and service development through regular house meetings and individual work. Consultation involving young people with alternative communication needs is not as effective.

The management team are striving for improvement and are aware of the strengths

and weaknesses within the homes documentation and records; however some practice with regards to care is institutional and outdated. There are several areas for improvement identified as a result of this inspection. They include: eradicating institutional practices to ensure dignity and respect; reviewing some sanctions; ensuring young people have access to emotional health support and adapting the young person's guide in line with individual's communication style among others.

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 suitable arrangements are made to ensure that the home is conducted in a manner which respects the privacy and dignity of children accommodated there and with due regard to sex, religious persuasion, racial origin, and cultural and linguistic background and any disability of children accommodated there (Regulation 11 (2)(a)(b))	06/12/2013
17 (2001)	ensure no measure of control or discipline is excessive or unreasonable (Regulation 17 (1))	06/12/2013
20 (2001)	promote and protect the emotional and mental health of children accommodated in the home (Regulation 20 (1))	06/12/2013
23 (2001)	ensure any activities in which children participate are so far as reasonably practicable free from avoidable risks, with specific regard to dangerous items used to build dens in the garden (Regulation 23 (b))	06/12/2013
30 (2001)	ensure that if in relation to a children's home, any of the events listed in column 1 of the table in Schedule 5 takes place, the registered person shall without delay notify the persons indicted in respect of the event in column 2 of the table. Regulation 30 (1))	06/12/2013

Recommendations

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

- further enable all children to communicate their views on all aspects of their care and support regardless of communication style (NMS 1.3)
- ensure all young people receive personalised care that promotes all aspects of their individual identity and are each treated as an individual rather than a

member of a group (NMS 2.1)

- ensure that where a child requires it, the children's guide is available in suitable alternative methods of communication (NMS 13.6)
- ensure all staff have their performance individually and formally appraised at least annually (NMS 19.6)
- ensure the result of all statutory reviews and reviews of placement plans are recorded on the child's file; with specific regard to identifying areas of change and areas of and for development (NMS 25.8)
- ensure through the use of language and practice children are not subject to discrimination or ridicule by virtue of their linguistic background or disability (Vol 5, Statutory Guidance, paragraph 2.36)
- base the use of keypads on a careful risk assessment ensuring children have as much freedom as possible consistent with the need to keep them safe and that the need to keep one child safe does not impact on others. (Vol 5, Statutory Guidance, paragraph 2.109)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **adequate**.

Young people make progress in all aspects of their lives in relation to their starting points, with individual examples including increased mobility and greater tolerance of peers. However this is not consistently effectively recorded and much of the evidence is anecdotal.

Young people benefit from consistent support and make steps towards improved confidence, self-esteem and understanding of their personal history. Young people are valued and staff's positive regard provides the foundation to develop appropriate relationships with peers and family.

Promotion of general good health means young people have some understanding of healthy lifestyles and what this means for them. Referrals to external health specialists further support young people to understand and manage individual health concerns. However delays in accessing appropriate therapy is a significant concern.

Attendance in education is excellent with all young people attending the organisations school. Joint working between the home and education staff enables young people to progress and achieve in line with their individual targets. Young people have positive relationships in the community, accessing local shops, youth groups and sports and leisure activities. Some young people positively further contribute to the home environment through activities such as gardening.

While living in the home young people learn self-care and independence skills in the community in line with individual plans and some household tasks to support their transition to adulthood.

Quality of care

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

Young people develop as a result of some very good relationships with staff who are genuinely concerned for their welfare. Young people talk positive about staff and observed interactions are supportive. Young people are confident in expressing themselves and routine consultation through group meetings and key work sessions ensures views are sought. Examples include young people choosing décor and meals and young people are encouraged to be involved in their reviews. However the views of young people who use alternative communication styles are thoroughly under represented.

Staff generally adhere to individual care plans ensuring consistency and a non-confrontational approach to behaviour management. The changing needs of young people are monitored and plans updated by staff in consultation, where appropriate, with parents, social workers and other professionals. Social workers say that staff communicate effectively with them and provide regular reports and summaries. However, cultural needs are not clearly identified within plans, resulting in young people not always being cared for as individuals. For example, young people are 'grouped' in the home based on communication style and personal care needs are not consistently promoted, with specific regard to hair care. Furthermore, institutional practice, such as leaving bathrooms doors open, is embedded in plans.

Young people are supported to attend medical appointments and sound observation identifies changes in physical medical conditions with prompt referrals to specialists. However plans do not consistently reflect young people's medical needs and changes in use of medical aids. Medication is stored appropriately and there is a thorough system to ensure safety when administering. In case of emergency, there are several first aiders on site at all times.

The generally well-maintained building is homely in parts, and there are plans to improve décor and the kitchen. There are many areas for independent or group interaction, with all spaces being well used by young people. Consideration has been given to young people's accessibility to their bedrooms beyond the keypad locked door. However there is no risk assessment in place to ensure the risk reduction for one does not restrict others liberty. Young people have access to independent advocates who visit regularly. Young people know how to make complaints, and they feel they are listened to.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people say they usually feel safe and that staff keep them safe in the home. Young people who on occasion feel unsafe, are supported to understand what this means for them and further determine changes to enable them to feel more secure.

There are a variety of adults available for young people to go to, including an independent visitor who attends the home regularly.

Young people raise bullying as a concern, but feel staff manage any incidents well, including engaging the young people in completing the bullying record to gain an understanding of the seriousness of the issue. Young people are further supported to understand how their actions can be deemed as bullying and provided with strategies to manage this.

Staff are confident in processes to follow should they be concerned for a young person's safety or welfare. Staff are acutely aware of individual young people's vulnerabilities and work to promote the safety of all young people. Investigations into concerns are prompt and thorough.

Young people do not go missing from care and staff identify what triggers young people to leave the building and support them verbally or by keeping them in sight. Should staff lose sight of a young person they are aware of the procedures to follow. The home has close relationships with the local police, to further ensure young people's safety in the community.

Individualised positive behaviour plans reward young people through small incentives. Young people do not consistently understand or agree with their sanctions, which on occasion are not proportionate, for example losing two positive activities or items. Young people are increasingly encouraged to reflect on their behaviour and consider how future responses could be different. Restraint is used as a final option, once all other de-escalation strategies have been exhausted.

Young people are safe from fire and other hazards as a result of thorough checks and procedures. Young people's risk assessments, while allowing them to take age appropriate risk, do not cover the use of bed guards when needed. Furthermore, young people's 'dens' are not always constructed of safe materials.

Staff recruitment appears sound, although full records for new staff are currently at head office; the manager has received confirmation that all vetting checks are complete.

Leadership and management

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

The manager, who has recently been registered, has a sound understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the home's processes and monitors the home through evaluative monthly monitoring of the building and records. There have, however, been failures to identify non-compliance with the requirements of regulation; including eradicating institutional practice; informing Ofsted of notifiable events; ensuring sanctions are proportionate; providing therapy as agreed with mental health professionals, ensuring young people's cultural and linguistic needs are met and that young people are free from hazards, such as unsafe materials being used in play

equipment.

Reports in relation to visits made to the home to monitor its conduct in line with Regulation 33 are sound in their interaction with young people and staff, but have failed to identify the shortfalls in regulation. The development plan, although not a standalone document, identifies key areas for improvement, including what areas have been identified since the manager's appointment.

The provider meets the aims and objectives as set out in the Statement of Purpose and staff understand the function and purpose of the home. The young people's guide is complicated and not reflective of the young people's communication styles. However it contains information on external advice and advocacy services.

The home demonstrates some excellent multi-agency working to improve outcomes for young people. Specialist physical and emotional health services, youth workers and police officers for example are actively involved to ensure positive care and outcomes for young people. Services that are not performing are challenged appropriately, although the home has not made notes at Looked After Child review meetings. Where the relating minutes are missing, young people's plans are not up to date. Young people are supported effectively to complain and the single external complaint has been managed appropriately. Relationships with the local community are generally positive.

The enthusiastic staff team, who receive specialist training, care compassionately for young people. However the use of institutional language is a downfall, as other young people also use these negative terms. Training needs are identified centrally and staff feel they have access to the training they require. Staff feel further supported through regular supervision, although most have not had their performance appraised annually.

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.