

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Paul Scott
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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 is a children's home operated by a private company. The home provides care and accommodation for up to four young people with a learning disability, specifically young people with autism aged 6 to 17 years. It is associated with a school that is linked to the same organisation (not on the same site). The organisation offers education and care as a package.

Overall effectiveness

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

Young people's outcomes are exceptionally positive. Young people thrive and make substantial progress because of the excellent support provided to them. One social worker said, 'young people are provided with the best possible care', and, 'the service provided is second to none'.

Staff work with young people in a way that maximises their individual potential. Young people's care plans are highly individualised and these provide staff with a personalised account of how young people's need will be met, on a day-to-day basis. Young people are cared for by experienced and well-trained staff, which enables them to meet the young people's complex needs very effectively. Communication difficulties are creatively overcome through empowering use of visual supports to facilitate effective communication. Staff are in regular contact with young people's parents. This ensures young people's views, and the views of their families, are actively sought.

Young people enjoy very positive and caring relationships with staff. They receive continuity of care, which enables them to develop trusting relationships. Staff are knowledgeable and familiar with young people's individual routines, enabling these to be maintained successfully.

The home is well managed. The manager places a strong emphasis on providing a high standard of care for young people, ensuring continuous improvement and development. Management understand the home's strengths and take action to rectify any identified weakness to promote the smooth operation of the home.

Some areas for attention are identified. These include improvements to safeguarding training and staff induction.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure new staff undertake the Children's Workforce Development Council's induction standards, commencing within 7 days of starting their employment and being completed within 6 weeks (NMS 18.3)
- ensure all staff, including any ancillary staff, are trained in appropriate safe-care practice, in particular the prevention of abuse, recognition of abuse, dealing with disclosures and the home's child protection procedures. (NMS 4.6)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people are making excellent progress in many aspects of their lives. They receive the individual support they need to develop their full potential, commensurate to their individual needs and ability. This means young people's life opportunities are not limited by the inequalities associated with their disabilities

Young people's health care is well managed with each young person receiving both routine and specialised healthcare support. Young people's health is given a high priority by staff, who are trained to meet the specific health needs of the young people they care for. For example, they are trained in autism to enable them to have a good understanding of the individual needs of young people. Staff encourage and support young people to eat a healthy and nutritional diet and take regular exercise. They make good use of their knowledge of young people to ensure individual health needs are met. For example, using play sessions to encourage motor skills and develop movement. Staff also work with healthcare experts. This means young people receive the right support they need to ensure their individual needs are met.

Young people are well supported to attend and engage in education. All young people attend the organisation's school. Staff are highly supportive of young people's education, directly supporting young people in school. One social worker said, 'this is a real strength of the service as it gives continuity and consistent support'.

Very well-organised and safe arrangements are in place for young people to maintain contact with their families. Social workers for the young people living at the home said, 'the home is very good at promoting and supporting contact'. The manager and staff have established very positive relationships with parents and carers, ensuring a collaborative approach to all aspect of young people's care. One social worker said, 'the home is good at working with families and the work done by staff has led to a significant increase in contact for one young person'. This means young people and their families are given the right support to ensure contact is a positive experience.

Young people are actively supported to prepare for adult life. All young people have an active support programme which is designed to develop basic living skills, with good support and encouragement from staff. This has enabled young people to learn new skills and develop their self confidence.

Quality of care

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

Young people live in a nurturing and exceedingly caring environment. Relationships between young people and staff are genuinely warm and friendly. Staff have consistently high aspirations for all young people in the home and have an excellent understanding of their individual needs. This enables staff to provide the right support to ensure young people's individual needs are well met and they achieve positive outcomes in their lives.

Staff provide young people with considerable support to express themselves so they can make informed decisions and choices. Every effort is made to consult with them and involve them. Young people's families are actively involved in consultation, as expert voices and advocates. This empowers young people and their families in the knowledge that their views and opinion are actively sought and considered, so they are able to have a say in matters that may affect them. One parent said, 'communication is excellent, I am in contact with the home every day and I am fully involved in making decisions about my child's life'.

Young people are cared for by staff who give their individual needs the highest priority. Care planning and staff's day-to-day practice recognise young people as individuals. Young people's needs are well documented in their very detailed and well-personalised care plans. The manager regularly monitors and reviews these to ensure young people are making good progress. Staff consistently put these plans into practice ensuring young people's needs arising from personal identity, culture and disability are promoted effectively. This means young people receive a very personalised service designed to meet their current individual needs and help them plan constructively for their future.

The arrangements made to promote the health needs of young people are very good. Comprehensive health action plans that detail historic, current, and any known future health interventions are used to ensure information is accurate and up to date. Staff actively support young people to access routine and specialist health services to ensure their individual health needs are met on a day-to-day basis. The home has excellent links with a number of specialist healthcare services that can be accessed through the organisations school as well as external physical and mental health professionals. This ensures young people receive the right support to meet their individual needs.

Young people are actively engaged in a wide range of enjoyable, stimulating and creative activities. Staff make good use of the resources available for young people. They enjoy spending time with young people and ensure their leisure time is

purposeful, interesting and fun. One social worker said, 'staff are good at promoting social inclusion. Young people have a good social life with lots of activities for them to do both in the home and in the community. Staff use activities to address other needs. For example, doing lots of physical activities to help young people with their difficulty sleeping'.

The location of the home ensures young people have good access to places of interest. The home is appropriately designed to cater for young people's complex needs, including needs arising from learning disabilities. The home is well maintained, appropriately decorated and furnished to meet young people's need. Each young person has their own bedroom which is decorated and personalised in accordance with young people's need and behavioural traits.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

There is a calm and gentle approach to behaviour management, in which staff are appropriately trained. When physical restraint has been used, it has been used properly to prevent young people from causing harm to themselves and others. Young people's behaviours are comprehensively assessed with identified risks and behaviour management strategies recorded in detail. Staff have a good knowledge of the young people they care for, and use positive relationships to encourage acceptable behaviour using praise, reward and encouragement. This enables staff to manage young people's challenging behaviour, sensitively and safely.

Young people live in a safe environment where they are protected from harm, for example, all care staff are trained in safeguarding. This means they are able to recognise suspected abuse and take decisive action to protect young people and make sure they get the right support they need. However, ancillary staff are not trained in safeguarding which compromises young people's safety.

High staffing ratios ensure young people receive the supervision and support they need to feel protected. Staff recruitment and vetting procedures are followed meticulously to ensure that staff are suitable and safe to work with vulnerable young people. There are no incidents of young people going missing. Young people are very effectively protected from bullying, intimidation and harassment, to promote their welfare and safety.

The home provides young people with a safe place to live. Young people's safety is at the centre of the home's practice. The home is kept free from potential hazards. Gas and electrical appliance checks are completed within the recommended timescales ensuring young people's physical safety is promoted. Fire fighting equipment is regularly serviced and fire drills are held frequently to make sure young people and staff know how to safely evacuate the building in the event of a fire.

Leadership and management

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

Young people live in a home that is effectively and efficiently managed in the best interest of their needs. The home meets the aims and objectives of its Statement of Purpose, and young people, their families and social workers are clear about the services and support the home provides.

The manager and staff demonstrate a strong commitment to delivering good quality childcare that places the needs of the individual at the centre of the work that is undertaken. This has resulted in young people making excellent progress in many aspects of their lives, including family contact, educational attendance and achievement and health.

The home can demonstrate its capacity to improve, based on its excellent track record, performance and compliance with standards and regulations. The manager clearly understands the home's strengths and weaknesses. The home has a written development plan in place, which is used effectively to identify areas for potential development and continue to improve the quality of care provided to young people.

The manager has positively addressed one of two recommendations made at the last inspection. Facilities within the home have been improved making the home more pleasant for young people to live in. However, ancillary staff have still not completed safeguarding training so this recommendation is raised again.

The operation of the home is well monitored. The home has monthly regulation 33 inspections by a person independent to the home, which the manager responds to, to inspect the quality of care provided by the home. The manager undertakes monthly regulation 34 monitoring and uses this effectively to ensure the care provided for young people is of a high quality and relevant to their individual needs.

Young people are cared for by an adequate number of experienced staff, who are well trained, and effectively supported. All care staff undertake mandatory training in key areas of practice and additional, and more specialised training is provided to meet the emerging needs of young people. Staff are well supported by the manager and have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Staff confirm they receive good supervision that enables them to improve their skills and develop their practice. New staff are provided with a localised induction that prepares them for working with young people. However, there are no formal arrangements in place to ensure new staff complete the Children's Workforce Development Council's induction standards within six months of confirmation of employment.

Young people's records are securely stored and provide a comprehensive picture of the individual young people's needs, development and progress. Young people's records contain up-to-date information including documents from the local authority.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.

