

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Bridget Goddard
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This children's home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to six children and young people of either sex with physical disabilities and/or learning disabilities. The young people's placements are made under short break arrangements and their ages range from nine to 17-years-old. The service is run by a county council.

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**.

This home provides a sound level of care, delivered by staff who are keen to do their best to ensure that young people have a positive and safe stay. Staff demonstrate some very skilled and sensitive care, but there are also shortfalls in routinely identifying young people's wishes and feelings and acting on them. Some young people make steady progress in acquiring independent skills and in managing their own emotions.

Young people benefit from staying in a well-maintained and comfortable house with various activities available both inside and out. Parents are generally happy with the quality of care offered, but some would welcome both giving and receiving more information about their young person's stay. There are some issues for the home management to address in relation to quality assurance procedures, records of restraint, and medication knowledge and training.

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
17B (2001)	ensure that the written record following a measure of control, restraint or discipline includes, within 24 hours, all necessary detail particularly a description of the measure used and the duration of the measure (Regulation 17B (3) (4))	05/10/2012
21 (2001)	ensure that all appropriate staff are able to make suitable arrangements for the recording, handling, safekeeping, safe administration and disposal of any medicines received into the children's home. (Regulation 21 (1))	05/10/2012

Recommendations

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

- ensure that children's views, wishes and feelings are acted upon, in the day-to-day running of the home and in important decisions or changes in the child's life unless this is contrary to their interests (NMS 1.1)
- ensure that the views of the young person's family about the young person's routines, and how the home contributes to their overall care plan are taken into account by the Registered Manager and their staff (Volume 5, statutory guidance, paragraph 2.27)
- ensure that the wishes, feelings and views of children and those significant to them are taken into account in monitoring staff and in developing the home (NMS 1.7)
- ensure that at six monthly intervals Regulation 34 reports are sent to Ofsted within twenty eight days of completion. (Volume 5, statutory guidance, paragraph 3.14)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people are generally happy, confident and secure when staying in this short breaks service. Some young people steadily acquire new skills, such as helping with aspects of their personal hygiene, and others now eat a wider range of food. This means that they are better prepared for transition to adult life. Other young people have better health outcomes. For example, they now have better sleep and their

bodily routines are now more regularised. This means that their quality of life has improved.

For most of the time young people live at home with their families who retain the major responsibility for monitoring their educational attendance and achievement. Most young people are transported between the home and school which promotes regular attendance. Young people's educational achievement is broadly in line with their peers.

Some young people are encouraged to participate in day-to-day decisions about their preferences for certain foods or activities. But this is not always applied to all young people. Many young people who attend have complex communication needs, and although some communication aids or strategies are known or available they are not used on a routine basis. This means that young people do not have maximum opportunities to develop a positive self-view.

Some young people have complex family relationships, and the home has been active in playing their part in ensuring that young people maintain important close relationships.

Parents and social workers say that young people have lots of opportunities to go out into the community either locally to the shops, or further afield in the home transport. This helps give young people access to new and stimulating opportunities.

Quality of care

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

Staff have warm relationships with young people and are keen to do their best to promote their welfare. Some staff demonstrate particularly strong skills in working with displays of complex behaviour, and others pay careful attention to including young people at all times. Staff sometimes give conflicting messages to young people, but generally boundaries are clearly and consistently set.

Staff know many of the young people very well and social workers say that staff, 'understand those young people's needs'. This means that young people are generally happy in the home with their core needs met. However, the home does try to engage young people more in the life of the home through monthly young people's meetings. Both the manager and the external visitor have positively encouraged these and put them in the diary, but they still rarely happen. When they do happen actions from them are not taken forward, for example, preparing specific communication cards and also arranging swimming. This means that the home does not have a routine way of collating young people's views to influence the running of the home.

Young people's short break care plans and placement plans are in place, and young people are cared for in line with these. Sometimes staff are not able to attend young people's reviews, but generally social workers say that the home is 'good' at

communicating with other agencies about young people. The home routinely visits the young person's school. This helps forge effective working relationships and promotes an exchange of ideas about the best ways of caring for young people.

The home has tried a number of initiatives to actively involve parents in the life of the home. These have up to now not been very successful. The home has recently initiated parent's questionnaires to get feedback, and early indications are broadly positive. However, some parents are clear that they both receive and are asked to give, insufficient information concerning their son or daughter.

Staff are caring and attentive when young people are not as well as usual. They seek appropriate opportunities to promote young people's health, and work well with medical staff to improve the quality of young people's lives. However, although arrangements for dealing with medication are generally safe and effective, there is a recent rise in staff themselves openly and commendably acknowledging minor errors. Staff are careful to ensure that any such errors that might affect young people adversely are promptly reported to parents and appropriate medical staff.

Young people enjoy various activities both on special trips and around the home especially, 'chilling out and watching TV'. Some young people's favourite activity is the Jacuzzi bath because it is, 'kinda relaxing'. Other young people enjoy the sensory room, and taking positive advantage of the well-equipped, safe garden for ball games. Some young people have said that they would like to go swimming, but this has not yet happened. The home is very well-maintained and equipped. It provides a light, airy and comfortable environment which helps young people to enjoy their short stay.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people demonstrate by their generally relaxed attitude around the house and responses to staff that they feel safe in the home. Young people are clearly trusting and responsive to staff members, and some are able to name staff that they would go to if concerned about anything. Young people are well-protected from neglect and abuse by attentive staff who are soundly trained in safeguarding procedures, and keen to keep young people as safe and happy as possible.

Satisfactory staff ratios and vigilant staff mean that young people are unlikely to go missing, but appropriate procedures are in place should this happen. Young people are further protected by low incidences of use of physical restraint and infrequent use of sanctions. Staff use positive behaviour management focusing on distraction wherever possible. This is generally successful, for example, some young people's behaviour in the home is now much less challenging than it was. The recording of physical restraint is not always in line with regulations, in that the duration of the event and the description of the technique used is not always recorded. This does not help to promote young people's safety.

All young people have individual risk assessments. This helps ensure that their particular vulnerabilities are taken into account to help keep them safe. The home and garden are kept appropriately safe and secure by regular checks. Each young person has their own personalised fire evacuation plan, and drills involving evacuations are done twice a year. The home pays good attention to ensuring that each young person has experience, at least annually, of a fire drill involving evacuation from the building. This helps keep young people protected from fire risks.

Leadership and management

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

The home is soundly managed by a permanently employed Registered Manager. There were no recommendations or requirements from the last inspection. There have been no complaints since the last inspection, and just one concern raised which was appropriately dealt with. The Statement of Purpose is currently being updated, and is compliant with the services offered.

There is an appropriate development plan in place which is updated annually. Regulation 33 reports are routinely completed in a timely and thorough fashion, and contain useful information to further improve the quality of care. The Registered Manager regularly completes Regulation 34 reports on the home which form a useful part of her quality assurance procedures. It is good practice to send these to Ofsted twice a year.

The manager further assesses the quality of care offered to young people by her oversight of key documents such as restraint and sanction records, by supervision and by working alongside her staff. The manager knows young people well, as she often does care shifts especially at holiday and weekend times. This enables her to do informal consultation with young people.

The manager is aware of some areas of the home's care that require further development, and some of these are being addressed, for example, further engagement with parents and the successful recruitment of additional staff. Staff are generally positive about their role, but comment that available training is now focused solely on mandatory courses with little opportunity to develop staff knowledge in practice areas. There are some minor shortfalls in the timeliness of medication training, which in the context of staff acknowledging increased minor errors in the administration of medicines should be addressed. Staff are positive about the regular supervision they receive, and comment that they feel, 'guided and supported in their role'. This helps support staff to provide a quality service to young people.

The home is physically maintained to a high standard of cleanliness and comfort. Records are usually clear, up to date and stored securely, and the home is aware of its responsibilities in relation to notifying significant events.

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.