

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Debbie Foster
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home, run by a local authority provides accommodation for up to 10 young people with complex needs arising from profound and multiple learning disabilities, autism and other associated health needs. The home provides a short-breaks service.

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**.

The staff team has a wealth of experience in caring and supporting young people with learning, autism and complex health needs. Young people benefit from an individual care approach to meet their needs. The staff team are child centred and dedicated which is assisting young people to reach their potential during their short break. This enables young people to make progress in a number of areas which include developing their personal care skills and improving their behaviour and social skills.

Strong nurturing and positive relationships exist between the staff and young people. Young people are actively consulted and their views are sought and acted upon. This assists young people in building trust and, in turn, enables them to work with staff well.

Effective health and safety practices are in place to keep young people safe.

Staff liaise with schools and parents to enable young people to achieve. The importance of young people's education is recognised by the staff.

The home has built successful links with a number of supporting professionals to respond to the diverse needs of young people. Young people have their needs assessed well and there are written placement plans outlining how these needs are to be met. Staff use the placement plans and supporting documents very well to support and achieve positive outcomes for young people.

There are effective support systems in place for the staff team and they express confidence in the manager. A wide selection of mandatory and other training related to the needs of the young people is being provided to the staff. There are good communication and monitoring systems in operation to support good care practices.

Some of the shortfalls identified during this inspection relate to: recording of all the progress young people are making in line with their care plans; reviewing the practice of locking areas at night and the electronic monitoring policy; broadening community based activities which support and incorporate more participation in the wider community; removing stains and odours from carpets.

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
31 (2001)	ensure that all parts of the children's home used by children are kept clean and reasonably decorated and maintained. This is in relation to removing stains from some carpets and addressing the odour in one bedroom (Regulation 31 (e))	28/02/2013

Recommendations

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

- ensure that risk reduction does not lead to institutional practice, in particular, review the practice of locking areas at night and the electronic monitoring policy (NMS 10.3)
- 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 full. In particular, record and review all the progress young people are making in line with their care plans, including health and independence areas and make the necessary changes where required (NMS 25.2)
- increase opportunities for children to pursue individual interests and hobbies to include a range of activities including leisure activities and trips. In particular, broaden opportunities for community based activities which support and incorporate extended participation in the wider community (NMS 7.2)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people enjoy their short breaks in a safe and supportive environment. Individual needs of young people are identified and well met to ensure their experience is a very positive one. Young people, facilitated by staff, make good progress during their short stays. They are encouraged to develop self-care skills and build further their social skills. For example, in terms of their personal care they are supported to help to dress themselves and attend to their personal hygiene, and in terms of social skills they are supported to make drinks and build friendships. A parent said, 'The work staff do, supports me a lot, in trying to help my child being more independent,' and a young person said, 'I like coming here, I get to meet up with my friends.'

Young people enjoy good outcomes in terms of their health and emotional well-being. Young people attend school and links are excellently promoted between parents and schools. Before and after young people stay at the home staff make contact with parents to share up-to-date information. This helps staff to provide consistent care to young people. Specialist health workers are involved, where appropriate, and staff receive training in specific health care needs such as managing epilepsy and tube feeding.

Young people are provided with a balanced and healthy diet. Meals are well prepared and the menu has been devised after active consultation with young people; their choices are included. All staff are aware of the special diets young people need and of their likes and dislikes. Frequent consultation also takes place with parents and carers to ensure all dietary needs are being fully met.

Young people enjoy a wide range of activities in the home and there are some trips out into the wider community. However, the majority of young people are not extensively involved in activities and interaction with the wider community. This is not always ensuring they are expanding their life experiences and building on the social skills they require to assist their families in everyday situations; for example, eating in restaurants and cafes. Young people said they enjoy going on the Xbox and going to the youth club. Another young person said they enjoyed the Halloween celebrations. A carer said, 'X enjoys the sensory room and the soft play area, there is plenty for him to do at the home and enjoy when he visits.' Young people and parents say that they benefit from meeting up with friends and peers during their short-break stay. This assists young people to broaden their friendship group, build on their self-confidence and increase their social skills.

Quality of care

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

Young people benefit from excellent relationships with staff in the home. A carer said, 'I would give the staff ten out of ten for the care they give to my boy, they make sure they know the little things that are so important to X, making him feel

comfortable and happy when he stays.' The staff team have a wealth of experience and receive high quality training to enable them to confidently care for young people with very diverse needs; these include needs arising from autism, severe learning disabilities and complex health needs. The staff team know the young people well and, consequently, this helps them to offer the best possible care.

Young people's communication skills vary considerably, some speak and others need assistance to communicate. Staff use a range of methods to enable them to effectively converse with young people and to ensure they can be understood. For example, they use PEC symbols, Makaton or eye pointing. Staff assist young people to actively contribute to their house meetings during which they are able to put their views and wishes forward. Young people's written views and comments are displayed in the home; they comment on the meals they like and those they don't like, along with the activities they want to do.

Although parents have full responsibility for their child's health the staff ensure young people's good health is effectively supported while on their short break. The service accurately identifies individual young people's conditions and health needs and these are given a high priority; these needs are met extremely well.

Staff support young people to attend their education. Excellent communication with schools ensures that home and school are aware of any issues which may impact on young people's education. An educational provider said, 'The home liaises with us excellently, the staff are consistent and come prepared and attend all reviews.' Key workers visit young people's schools to share information and practice. This helps to ensure that all agencies are working consistently to benefit young people.

All young people are cared for in accordance with their care plans; these are tailored to meet individual diverse needs. Key workers routinely have contact with families to aid the task of reviewing these plans. Staff work alongside parents to support young people to make progress with daily living tasks; this assists young people in developing confidence in their abilities and gaining a positive self-view. However, on occasions, aspects of the care plans are not always specific. For example, not all clearly detail on-going work to develop independence skills. Although staff and parents can demonstrate verbally where young people are making progress in their lives, this is not always fully evidenced or indicated in the care plans and other supporting records.

Overall the home is of a maintained to a high standard and provides a comfortable and pleasant environment for young people to enjoy during their stay. Different zones within the home provide three separate domestic style houses, linked by large centre area with additional recreational space. All young people have a single bedroom. However, some carpets are stained and one bedroom has an unpleasant odour. There is specialist equipment and adaptations in one Zone which is used by young people with complex health needs. These include a variety of hoists and specialist beds. The home has a sensory room and soft play area. There are outside spaces for young people, including access for young people in wheelchairs. The manager ensures that standards, overall, are high and the fabric of the home is

subject to regular maintenance.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people are kept safe in the home; safeguarding is a high priority. Young people's safety and welfare is very important and central to all practice. Parents and carers feel strongly that their children are kept safe during their stays at the home. A carer said, 'The staff have checked out with us about every aspect of X's safety, without us having to bring things to their attention, I just would not leave him there if it was not safe.' Staff are very proactive in recognising the particular vulnerabilities relating to the diverse needs of the young people in their care.

All young people's individual needs are risk assessed and areas of vulnerability are identified. This has resulted in no young people going missing, but in the event of this happening the home has effective measures to deploy to search, report and then return young people safely. Risk assessments are effectively implemented to ensure young people are kept safe in a variety of situations. However, in an attempt to keep some young people safe during the night time staff use of a keypad system to secure them within an area during the night. This practice is not currently used systematically. Although this is used to assist safety, this practice is imposed for a minority of young people who stay at the home. It is not reasonable to restrict the movement of all young people and the home's electronic monitoring policy is not clear and specific about the use of keypads.

Young people are protected because staff members undertake mandatory training on signs and symptoms of abuse so they are alert to any concerns. The staff are aware of good anti-bullying practices and are vigilant to any signs that a child may be bullied. Staff and parents say there is no bullying occurring. The home sends a clear message to young people that bullying is not acceptable. As a result, young people are safe and do not experience bullying.

Young people benefit greatly from the promotion of positive behaviour. Staff have a good awareness of possible triggers for individual young people. Physical intervention is used as a last resort and only occurs if a young person is endangering themselves or others. Sanctions are rarely used and are only given if a young person understands their use. As a result, negative behaviour is successfully re-directed and de-escalation techniques are used to reduce the number of incidents. This promotes young people to behave in a positive and socially acceptable way.

Leadership and management

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

The manager provides strong leadership. There are established systems in place to ensure effective monitoring and evaluation of the running of the home. Regulation 33 monitoring visits occur at regular intervals and the Registered Manager addresses

any issues raised through these. She also fulfils her commitment to monitoring and improving the quality of care in the home through completing Schedule 6 reports, and Regulation 34 reports. Action has been taken to address the previous recommendations made at the last inspection.

The home ensures the young people receive the children's guide at the point of placement and that the contents of the children's guide are explained to the child in a way that is accessible to them. A development plan is in place which is subject to regular review and includes a range of realistic targets for the home.

Regular informal and formal supervision takes place. This ensures that staff have access to continual advice and guidance in relation to their care of young people. Regular staff meetings and detailed handovers, during which the care of young people is discussed, take place daily. This ensures young people are well cared for in line with their care plans and any changes since the young person's last stay are taken into account.

Staff training is a high priority in the home. Most staff have obtained an appropriate child care qualification at level 3, or are working towards this. In addition to all mandatory training, the staff team undertakes specialist courses to enable them to care for young people's complex health needs. These include dealing with needs arising from autism and carrying out tube feeding. Consequently, young people benefit from care which is appropriate to meet their complex needs.

Case files are stored securely in the home and are of a good standard and easy to read. As a result, staff are able to gain a good overview of the young person's specific needs; this assists staff to provide the best possible care.

The physical environment of the home is of a high standard. All necessary repairs are attended to by designated maintenance staff. Consequently, young people benefit from a homely environment.

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.