

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Sharron Escott
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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

The provision is a purpose built children's home that is run by a local authority. The home is able to accommodate up to 14 children and young people of either sex, aged between four and under 18 years of age who have a learning disability including those who have additional more complex or challenging needs.

The children receive medium to long-term care as well as respite care. In addition the home provides a day care service for up to 10 children during weekends and school holiday periods.

At the time of this inspection there were five children present in the home.

Overall effectiveness

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

Children and young people are happy in their environment and it is apparent that the staff team aim to ensure that they have a good time. This is generally achieved with good outcomes where children and young people are cared for and supported in a safe environment. Many children have complex health needs and require support in everyday life and activities. Staffing levels are sufficient to meet the needs of the young people who are placed long term and on short breaks.

Positive feedback has been received from placing authorities and parents in relation to the care and support provided to children and young people, particularly the flexibility the service demonstrates.

The registered manager demonstrates an understanding of the areas for development; a competent and committed staff team appropriately supports him. A number of areas that require addressing in order to improve the quality of service provided have been identified: the system for monitoring matters identified in schedule 6 is not developed or fully maintained and the views of the child's family, social workers and the Independent Reviewing officer (IRO) are sought regularly on the child's care. The recruitment checks for all new employees do not include telephone enquiries as well as written references. The staffing rotas do not include scheduled time to ensure handovers are held and include the planning of spending time with individual children, specifically those requiring 1:1 supervision.

The service demonstrates a capacity to improve; action has been taken to address the one recommendation from the previous inspection fully. However all staff still do not have their performance individually and professionally appraised annually.

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
34 (2001)	ensure a system is established and maintained for monitoring the matters in schedule 6. (Regulation 34(1) (a))	01/08/2011

Recommendations

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

- ensure all staff have their performance individually and formally appraised at least annually by their line manager and takes into account any views of the children the service is providing for (NMS 19.6)
- ensure telephone enquiries are made as well as obtaining written references (NMS 16.1)
- ensure that staff rotas include scheduled time to ensure handovers are held and they include the planning of spending time with individual children, specifically 1;1 supervision (NMS17.6)
- ensure the views of the child's family, social worker and IRO are sought regularly on the child's care. (NMS 1.4)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Parents and staff report that children and young people enjoy their time at the home. The young people are thriving in the highly nurturing and supportive environment. The young people have been supported to attend the school prom. The young people selected their dresses and tuxedos and thrived on the positive experience they had. Photo memorabilia is proudly displayed allowing the children and young people to reflect on this outstanding experience. They are cared for by a dedicated staff who have worked at the home for many years and who strive to provide positive opportunities and experiences.

The primary responsibility for supporting health care needs remains with parents as young people are voluntarily accommodated at this home. Medical needs are identified and reflected in comprehensive individual health and care plans. All staff have current first aid and the kitchen staff have food hygiene certificates. This outstanding level of training ensures staff are competent at addressing children and young people's diverse health needs and contributes to the enjoyment of a healthy lifestyle. The service closely monitors young people's health during their placement and responds promptly to any emerging health concerns.

Young people and staff eat together in each unit, which promotes a positive social occasion and develops young people's skills with waiting, turn taking and making choices. Young people are provided with a high quality, balanced and varied diet, which reflects their needs, personal preferences and any specialist dietary requests.

Children and young people benefit from well established relationships between the service and families. Key workers support children and young people to maintain contact with parents during their stay and also complete communication dairies to ensure a shared understanding of children's daily lives.

Care and placement plans identify the methods of communication used for each child and young person. There is good provision of symbol documentation available within the home.

This service has the resources to provide a range of activities in-house and the use of a minibus to access the community. Young people and children enjoy frequent trips out to local parks, supermarkets, and local places of interest.

Children receive full time education and the home promotes good communication between the school and the service, Young people are not only attending but are making exceptional progress with their educational attainment. This is further supported by staff attending education reviews as appropriate. An educational professional stated they have worked with the home for many years and 'Staff are willing to work with us and use the school's effective strategies at the home. The location of the home is strength and supports joint working. Effective communication and seamless partnership working is still being developed; this is due to procedures and resources rather than lack of willingness of the staff at the home.'

Quality of care

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

Staff work in partnership with parents, professionals and schools to assess children's needs prior to accessing the service. Together they draw up care plans, protocols and agree a package of care.

Children have a tailor made transition which includes visiting the service to meet staff and join in with activities before building up to an overnight stay; this helps to develop children's confidence and trust in the staff. The service demonstrates a flexible approach to accommodating requests for specific stays and supporting families during a crisis or emergency. There is a minimal approach to seeking the views of parents, social workers and independent reviewing officers to influence the running of the service.

Children and young people are given individual choices in relation to food and activities. The children and young people use various methods of communication, the most commonly used is Picture Exchange Communication Systems (PECS).

There is a clear procedure in place to store, administer, and manage children's medication and this is understood by staff that are responsible in this area. Medication management is monitored and administered by shift leaders; this is to ensure best practice.

Children and young people can take part in a range of activities and the premises have ample indoor and outdoor space for each designated unit within the home. The secured gardens have a range of outdoor activities and have the space for children and young people to ride bikes and play games; the central courtyard area is currently being developed to provide additional recreational opportunities for the children and young people. The soft play area, sensory room, computer area and resources for arts and craft, music and games are currently being refurbished and are due to reopen soon.

The home has a complaints procedure that is presented in an accessible format in an attempt to ensure that it can be understood by the children and young people.

Case files are in place for each child and are individualised; the quality of information recorded is good. Care plans, individual risk assessments and daily records fully reflect children and young people's assessed needs and the actual care provided.

The home is arranged into four living units with a fifth area for day care or emergency admissions; one unit is specially adapted for children with physical disabilities. A maintenance programme is near completion, this includes redecoration and new furniture.

The staff team are keen to provide a homely environment; this is evident in their efforts in maintaining the upkeep of each unit and using the garden areas for additional play opportunities. Families are pleased with the care provided and resources available and comment that it has enabled their child to have the freedom to safely explore and play.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Families report confidence in the service for keeping children and young people safe. They say the staff team support children's complex health needs, enabling appropriate risk taking.

Children enjoy sound relationships and interact positively with staff and others. The service promotes a positive culture of managing behaviour; sanctions are used, these are predominately 'time out' and therefore the main focus is on encouragement, praise, and de-escalation. Staff receive regular training in an approved method of physical intervention and are knowledgeable about how to use these practices appropriately. The use of restraint is minimal, records support interventions are used appropriately to ensure children and young people are safe from danger and harm.

Sufficient staffing ratios provide a level of supervision where incidents of any children and young people going missing, or incidents of bullying are negated. Areas of the premises and places in the community have been subject to risk assessments and staff are knowledgeable about the particular vulnerabilities of the children and young people who use this service.

The policies and procedures in relation to safeguarding are readily available. Staff receive training on safeguarding and they recognise the particular vulnerabilities relating to the diverse needs of young people with disabilities and take appropriate action to address them. Referrals and issues of concern are reported promptly to the local safeguarding board. The home adopts a procedure to employ new staff following safer recruitment practices, however telephone verification has not taken place to support the written references attained.

Staff are aware of their responsibilities to monitor and vet visitors to the home and this process is generally adhered to. The environment is adequately maintained and issues of health and safety are monitored. Regular servicing ensures the safety of appliances such as hoists, adaptable beds, electrical appliances and the fire detection system. Fire drills are carried out routinely.

Leadership and management

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

The home is managed by a suitably qualified and experienced manager who has the support from a committed staff team. The registered manager and shift leaders keep up-to-date with new information and legislation and this is discussed with staff during regular team meetings.

The recommendations raised at the last inspection have not been fully acted upon. All staff are required to have their individual performance appraised annually. Additional recommendations have been raised that require the staff rotas to identify times for handovers and supervision time spent with the children and young people. The views of the parents and professionals are not sought regularly on the care provided so they can contribute to the homes development plan and reflective practise.

Young people's privacy is protected by ensuring that confidential records are kept in locked cabinets with restricted access. There are regular visits under regulation 33 of the Children's Homes Regulations, and the registered manager undertakes regulation 34 checks on a regular basis; however the detail within these reports does not evidence effective monitoring to identify patterns and trends of changing behaviours and outcomes.

Staff feel supported by senior staff and benefit from team meetings enabling the opportunity to discuss key issues, strategies for supporting children and young people and sharing practice. Handovers between shifts occur starting with the shift leader and then detailed written handovers for each young person is available in each unit.

The service provides a detailed induction programme which requires new staff to work alongside more experienced staff. Mandatory training is delivered and regularly updated.

There is a clear local authority strategic plan in place to identify long term aims and objectives of children's provision, however, this does not sufficiently ascertain the service's individual strengths and weaknesses and areas for development.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.