

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	12/07/2011
Inspector	Sonya Robinson
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Residential special school (>295 days/year)

Date of last inspection	21/02/2011
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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

All young people considered for placement experience autistic spectrum disorder with associated communication and sensory impairment and possible learning disability. The home is owned by a national organisation. Most young people who access this service access the organisation's school.

Placements in the home are generally provided for school terms only, with accommodation being provided on weekdays and weekends. Periods of short break care are agreed on an individual basis.

Overall effectiveness

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

Young people live in a warm and safe environment that enables them to have positive outcomes in many areas of their lives. The home has created an atmosphere where young people, parents and staff work together to make sure young people are safe, lead healthy lifestyles, enjoy learning and achieve, and are prepared for adult life. Young people are viewed positively by staff and are seen as individuals with different needs, tastes and interests. Their specific needs are clearly identified in written plans that outline how they will be met on a daily basis.

Feedback from parents, social workers and young people say that they feel safe staying at the home. There are regular young people's meetings and young people have key members of staff with whom they can communicate with on a one-to-one basis if they are anxious or upset. Young people enjoy good relationships with staff and staff were observed as being helpful and enjoying spending time with young people. Staff provide clear professional and personal boundaries for young people consistent with good childcare.

All placements are planned to ensure that the home is the right place for individual young people and is able to help them with their needs.

There are three requirements and three recommendations highlighted within this report. These relate to medication records, recording of restraints and the young person's guide. Good practice issues highlighted, include recording in young people's records, general household maintenance along with further 'homely touches' and staff being able to access safeguarding procedures of all placing authorities, who place within this service.

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
21 (2001)	ensure that there are suitable arrangements for the recording, handling, safekeeping, safe administration and disposal of any medicines received into the children's home (Regulation 21 (1))	12/08/2011
17B (2001)	ensure that where a measure of restraint is used on a child the record must include details of any method used to avoid the need of that measure, along with a description of the measure used (Regulation 17B (4)(b))	31/08/2011
5 (2001)	update and revise the children's guide. (Regulation 5)	31/08/2011

Recommendations

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

- ensure that entries in records are legible and clearly expressed (NMS 22.4)
- ensure the home provides a comfortable and homely environment and is well maintained and decorated (NMS 10.3)
- ensure that the home has access to young people's placing authorities child protection procedures and that any conflicts within them are discussed and resolved as far as possible with the Local Authority in which the home is situated. (NMS 20.4)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people have choice and opportunities to explore a range of sports and leisure activities that help them build up talent and maximise their potential. The care staff support of young people aids them to pursue hobbies and interests and make these integral to day-to-day life. This includes young people engaging with the wider community on a daily basis. Young people's school attendance is sustained well beyond the age of 16. Young people are making good progress in developing a positive self-awareness, life skills and educational attainment. The young people's confidence is commensurate with their age and understanding. Young people are supported in developing their transition to adulthood. Young people who move from the home in a planned way receive immense input and parents and young people have felt supported. Parents who have undergone this process have informed Ofsted that the home is 'very person centred, my child's needs come first'.

Young people have inclusive access to health services to meet their physical, emotional and mental health needs. Through support, young people gain informed understanding of the importance of healthy lifestyles. Care staff reinforce this awareness through helping young people learn about undertaking regular exercise and promoting a balanced and nutritious diet.

Young people's backgrounds are respected by care staff who are helping young people to gain understanding and knowledge of their heritage and identity. This includes meaningful contact with families and friends important to them.

Irrespective of disability, ethnicity, faith, gender or belief, young people are accomplishing personal milestones that are preparing them for adulthood.

Quality of care

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

Staff provide young people with consistency, structure and routine, as a result young people feel settled. Staff find ways to support young people in making progress in aspects of their lives. For example, staff have devised picture boards and activities to help young people when they feel upset or frustrated which help staff to calm and reassure them.

Staff are effective at building positive relationships with young people. They are committed to enabling young people to overcome the difficulties they may face to lead happy and fulfilling lives. However, this isn't always consistently expressed in the home's documentation in a legible and clear manner. This is also apparent in the 'service to school to home communication book'. This has provoked mixed views from social workers and parents and has caused some frustration and anxiety at times.

Staff place the well-being of individual young people at the centre of their practice. Staff put young people's plans into practice effectively to ensure young people's specific needs are met on a day-to-day basis. Care planning and staff's day-to-day practice recognises young people as individuals with different needs, backgrounds, interests and views. They ensure that young people receive an individual service designed to meet their personal and communication needs and disability.

Staff use a variety of communication techniques appropriate to individual young people to seek young people's views and wishes. Staff encourage young people to develop their language skills to enable them to express their views and make choices about their lives and the running of the home, including choice at meal-times and what they want to do after school. Staff's knowledge of young people's communication styles enables them to identify when young people are feeling sad or unhappy and sort out any problems. Young people often use non-verbal communication to identify their needs; for example, a young person let staff know that they were enjoying the humour of a particularly film by rewinding it and replaying the piece and laughing excitably. The young person was clearly enjoying this and before long a group had gathered and all were laughing and sharing the fun.

Young people live in a healthy environment that actively promotes their physical health and emotional well-being. They are supported to develop healthy lifestyles. Staff understand the importance of a well-balanced diet and ensure young people enjoy healthy and nutritious homemade meals. Young people are actively involved in choosing meals they like. Staff have understanding of young people's specific health needs and ensure they are met on a daily basis. Staff liaise regularly with parents and guardians to ensure young people get suitable medical advice and treatment when they are feeling unwell. There are systems in place for the administration of medication; however minor errors in recording were apparent. Staff have undertaken training in medication and there is always a trained first aider on the premises.

The vast majority of the young people who use this service also access the organisations school. Staff have created an environment that promotes young people's education. This includes staff actively encouraging young people building

confidence in their abilities through enjoyable activities in the community, such as going swimming, climbing and going to animal farms. However, recording in the 'service to school to home communication book' doesn't always reflect the level of activities undertaken. Staff ensure that the daily routine supports young people's participation in education and school attendance. Young people have easy access to books, art materials, board games and other educational resources.

Young people stay in a suitably designed and comfortable house in a quiet residential neighbourhood. It is close to shops, parks and community amenities. The house is clean, and suitably furnished to reflect young people's personalities and needs. However, some areas are looking worn and a little sparse in parts, for example, décor and the lack of 'homely touches' in parts. This is not withstanding young people's tolerances and acceptance.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people's individual care plans clearly identify any risks they may face and outline effective strategies to ensure their welfare is promoted and protected. Staff give young people's safety the highest priority and they are well trained in safeguarding. They are able to recognise the signs and symptoms of abuse. However, staff do not have access to all placing authorities safeguarding procedures.

Staff ensure plans for young people's safety are consistently put into practice and fully address young people's specific needs. They have good knowledge of young people's particular vulnerabilities relating to level of understanding and disability. This enables them to ensure young people are safe at the home and in the community. The level of supervision and support young people receive ensures that they do not go missing and are free from bullying and harassment. Staff balance the need for protection with enabling young people to take reasonable risks as part of their growth and development. As a result, young people are able to enjoy some of the same social experiences as other young people their age, for example, going to the shops and taking part in activities they enjoy.

There is minimal use of physical restraint and when used it is kept to the briefest time possible. However, the recording of incidents requiring restraint is not always accurate or clear. For example, the logs do not always provide a concise description of the measures used or any detail of any methods used that attempted to avoid the need for the restraint. The Registered Manager does monitor all incidents that have involved restraint in order to review practice and change behaviour management strategies if required.

Young people live in a physically safe environment. They are protected by a comprehensive range of detailed health and safety procedures, risk assessments and checks. Staff carry out regular health and safety checks, including fire drills, to ensure the premises are safe and young people know what to do in case of an emergency.

The recruitment and selection of people working at the home is good to make sure young people are protected. The manager carefully ensures that staff have the skills and competencies to meet the needs of individual young people. Also, there are suitable systems in place to ensure that visitors to the home are suitably checked and supervised which protects young people.

Leadership and management

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

The home is managed by an experienced, qualified and competent Registered Manager. The organisation has a business plan in place which includes an improvement agenda. This demonstrates that they want to continue to improve their service and the outcomes for young people in their care. Staff say that they are supported by the manager and have a clear understanding of their role and responsibilities. They confirm that when they need support and guidance the manager is available and helpful. Staff are well supported on a daily basis and they are consistently receiving one-to-one supervision on a regular basis.

At the last inspection undertaken in February 2011, one requirement and three good practice recommendations were raised. The requirement was that the service must have an up-to-date gas safety certificate: this has been complied with. The recommendations were that the Registered Manager should undertake professional training and care staff should also undertake relevant childcare training. The manager has completed appropriate training and care staff have either completed relevant training or are part way through. The final recommendation was that the service should have a written development plan. This has also been completed and identifies the aims and objectives for the future development of the service.

The home has a clear Statement of Purpose that sets out the aims of the home and how it will operate. Young people receive a children's guide to the home, however it does not contain all relevant information, for example, of the Children's Rights Officer at Ofsted or details about independent reviewing officers.

The management of this service clearly demonstrate a strong commitment to delivering good childcare practice tailored to the individual and personal needs of the young people they look after. The effectiveness of this approach is evident in the good progress young people are making. Some social worker feedback has been 'generally they are brilliant', 'my young person is definitely happy and supported appropriately' and 'communication is timely, analysis of the situation is good and they take the appropriate action'.

Young people are looked after by a staff team who are caring. The skills within the staff team match young people's needs well. The numbers of staff on duty are sufficient to meet the needs of young people. This includes the support they need for activities and personal care.

The home has systems in place to review the quality of care provided. The Registered Manager consistently monitors the running of the home every month. She identifies areas for improvement and takes action to ensure that the home meets young people's needs and promotes their welfare. A representative on behalf of the owner of the home also visits the home every month to monitor how well young people are being cared for. There are systems in place to notify Ofsted of any significant issues that may occur within the home or with regards to the young person placed. The home has a good relationship with the local community and neighbours.

Young people's records don't always provide a clear and detailed picture of young

people's lives and experiences. However, the written records are securely stored and contain up-to-date information about them, including the relevant documents from placing authorities.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.