

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Brian Mcquoid
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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 service offers short breaks for up to 12 children and young people with severe learning difficulties that may include physical disabilities and additional health problems. It is run by a registered charity which provides support and information services to children, young people and their carers throughout the area. The service is available to children and young people, of both sexes, aged between two years and 17 years. The unit consists of two residential areas located within a modern purpose-built complex that also contains a school and the offices of the charity. All those using the service are subject to a full pre-admission assessment aimed at identifying their care needs. This information is then used to determine if the service is able to meet their specific needs.

Overall effectiveness

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

The unit provides a nurturing and supportive environment in which young people are happy and receive a good standard of personalised care. Staff treat young people with respect as individuals and young people enjoy very positive relationships with them. Observations saw staff communicating very effectively with young people and able to meet their individual and sometimes complex needs. Seeking the views of young people and providing them with choice are principles integral to how the unit operates and are applied as much as possible. Young people are encouraged and supported to develop their levels of independence and achieve positive outcomes in this area. There are close working relationships with external agencies which contribute very effectively to promoting and protecting the welfare of young people. Close working relationships with schools and extremely good school attendance is a clear example of this. Young people were observed to be safe at the unit and staff displayed a good understanding of their responsibilities in relation to safeguarding.

The manager has an awareness of the unit's strengths and weaknesses and is implementing positive developments. Established systems provide for very effective monitoring of the unit's operation and of the welfare of individual young people. Regulation 33 visits are also taking place as required and provide valuable feedback on how the unit is performing.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- contact relevant placing authorities where necessary to chase up outstanding reviews of young people's plans. (NMS 25)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

The unit provides a nurturing environment where young people are very happy to stay and where they are supported as much as possible to make positive developments in their lives. Staff develop positive relationships with young people and successfully address a wide range of individual and sometimes complex needs. Young people are afforded choice during their stay and staff work successfully on individual goals designed to enable young people to maximise their potential. Clear plans support young people in acquiring independence skills and developing positive behaviours. Young people's school attendance while at the unit is excellent with staff being fully supportive and in some instances the organisation providing transport. Good communication and working relationships with the schools attended by young people are effective in ensuring a consistency of approach to working with individuals and ensuring their needs are met. Parents comment positively on how their children are happy while at the unit and how their individual needs are well met.

Young people are encouraged and supported as much as possible in adopting healthy lifestyles. The unit's cook provides healthy home cooked meals using fresh ingredients as much as possible. Young people are provided with a choice at meal time and individual preferences and special dietary needs are well catered for. Healthy snacks are always available and staff provide young people with lots of opportunities for purposeful recreational activities. Observations saw young people who use wheelchairs provided with opportunities for exercise and staff supporting programmes of physiotherapy.

Quality of care

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

The service provides a good quality of personalised care for young people who present a wide range of needs associated with their disabilities. Young people were observed to be very happy in the company of staff and to enjoy positive and constructive relationships with them. Staff know the young people they care for extremely well and are able to communicate effectively with them. Care is provided in accordance with detailed care plans and staff successfully promote young people's physical and emotional well being. Established links with external agencies support staff in addressing identified individual needs including those related to health for which they have specific training. Young people were seen to be provided with opportunities to make choices as much as possible and staff were very aware of behaviour which indicated individuals may be unhappy for some reason.

Parents were very positive about the service and the care provided for their children. 'The staff are very caring', 'the unit is well run and has motivated and caring staff', 'I am very pleased with the service', and 'when I drop my child off I know she is well looked after' were some of the comments received. A placing social worker and an independent reviewing officer spoken to both also commented positively on the care provided at the service.

The unit provides a purpose built environment that is well suited to meeting the aims and objectives of the service. Specialist equipment is available throughout and is used effectively to support the provision of care. The facilities are extremely well maintained and there has been lots of work to successfully create a child-centred atmosphere. The décor is colourful with lots of murals, displays, photographs of young people enjoying activities, and young people's artwork. Young people stay for only short periods but are able to bring personal things with them if they want to. Outside areas provide a safe place for young people to play and there are lots of opportunities for them to do things they enjoy doing. Wide corridors for instance were seen being used creatively for young people to enjoy soft play activities, and a freshly painted and rubberised courtyard was used extensively by several young people during the inspection.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

The unit provides a safe and secure environment for young people within which they are protected from harm at all times. Parents report that their children's safety is given a high priority and observations support this view. Young people benefit from high staffing levels which provide for appropriate supervision and the effective management of risk. Consideration is given to the compatibility of groups when arranging respite programmes and staff reported no concerns related to bullying. Observations during the inspection supported this view with the group of young people seen to be compatible and to enjoy some social interaction during play. Policies and procedures support and promote safe working practices within the unit and staff have a sound understanding of safeguarding procedures. Appropriate action is taken in response to incidents concerning the protection of young people and the home works closely with other statutory agencies whenever necessary. Ofsted have duly been notified of any significant event in accordance with the regulations.

Staff do not use any form of sanction or physical intervention to manage young people's behaviour. They have successfully developed positive relationships with young people and are skilled at managing the isolated incidents of challenging behaviour that occur. The unit has a clear system in operation for the management of risk. Written risk assessments address the risks associated with fire, the premises, and all activities undertaken by young people. Young people take part in regular fire drills and all checks and tests of fire safety equipment are being carried out as required. Staff employed at the unit are subject to rigorous recruitment procedures which provide the necessary safeguards for the welfare of young people.

Leadership and management

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

The unit is well resourced and is being effectively managed by an established manager who is well qualified and who has significant residential childcare experience. The manager has a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the unit and is implementing positive developments. The unit has a good track record of addressing requirements and recommendations from previous inspections. The staff group work well as a team, providing a high degree of consistency of care for young people, and working successfully in meeting the aims and objectives of the service. Young people benefit from positive relationships with staff and high levels of staffing enables them to receive the individual attention that they need. Young people are cared for by a staff team that is well supported and who have completed training enabling them to perform their roles successfully. Daily handovers and regular staff meetings are used to good effect to discuss and monitor the needs of individual young people. The unit has established positive links with external agencies which benefit young people, and positive comments were received from placing authorities about how the unit operates.

The unit's Statement of Purpose is comprehensive and clearly states the aims and objectives of the service. Established systems provide for effective monitoring of the service and of the welfare of individual young people. Individual case records are well maintained and stored securely, however not all young people's files contained records of statutory reviews or reviews of placement plans.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.