

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Angus Mackay
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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 home provides accommodation for six children and young people, with special educational needs and/or disabilities, between the ages of eight and 17 years. The home is a domestic-size house that has been converted for its purpose. The registered provider is also the manager. The home is situated within walking distance of the town centre and has easy access to public transport.

The home has the necessary equipment to support young people with a physical disability. There are six single rooms, a lounge/dining room, a sensory room and a kitchen. The home provides a Statement of Purpose and a children's guide with information about the facilities and services provided.

Overall effectiveness

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

Young people experience good respite care, which gives them positive experiences and allows their families time where they say they can avoid worrying about them. They, their families and social workers show trust in the staff caring for them, who follow strict guidelines to ensure they are appropriately cared for and properly safeguarded.

Young people stay in a calm, caring, extremely well-maintained environment where their positive behaviours are developed through well-applied care plans. They have limited communication skills but staff show excellent understanding of them and seek to engage them positively in exercising choice and in maintaining and improving these skills.

Young people are particularly successful at managing the very difficult transitions between the children's home and school or their own home. Social workers and parents praise the home for the outstanding success in reducing the stress and attendant difficulties young people had previously suffered from these transitions.

Managers provide excellent role models to staff and have a clear vision for improvements to the service for young people. They are enthusiastic about the benefits to young people from the planning and monitoring of the service recommended following the inspection.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure that telephone enquiries are made in relation to references for all people working in the children's home (NMS 16.1)
- ensure monitoring visits to the home are carried out under Regulation 33 (NMS 21.7)
- ensure the manager regularly monitors, in line with regulations, all records kept by the home as set out in schedule 6 (NMS 21.2)
- ensure the development plan is reviewed annually. (NMS 15.2)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people and families experience improved life experiences and outcomes assisted by their time in the home. Examples of success were provided with all children for instance one mother said, 'We have never been able to go on holiday before so this is great we can relax knowing he is being well looked after when we are away.' Another young person has vastly improved in remaining in the classroom which the social worker attributes to the work done by the home.

Young people display a reduction in anxiety at periods of transition to and from the home or to school, actually looking forward to going to the home and being helped to leave it. This having been developed by skilled staff interventions, reduces the incidences of violence, disruption or withdrawal in young people. Parents say that the young people benefit from this improvement to the quality of their lives as do their families.

Young people enjoy engagement in a range of activities which improve their social inclusion and develop their life skills. For example they assist staff in preparing meals which are healthy, varied and meet their personal and cultural needs. This helps young people learn skills appropriate to their level of ability and aids in the transition planning to adulthood at which the home excels. Parents interviewed expressed their appreciation at the positive benefits to the young people from the good diet, exercise and excellent care practice of the staff. They highlighted progression in the young people such as increased engagement in meaningful community activities, improved body shape, ability to go out of the home and reduced anxiety. They stated that although small changes occurred at any time they were significant over time.

Young people make good progress in developing a positive self view and emotional resilience. Social workers and parents comment at how good the home is at meeting each young person's individual needs. One social worker commented, 'They are very

supportive of children. It truly is a bespoke service, they put together tailor-made packages for young people.'

Quality of care

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

Children enjoy care from staff dedicated to providing them with positive life-enhancing experiences. Staff utilise play situations to introduce learning to young people and to aid them in developing a positive use of leisure time. For example they were playing with puzzles which required simple addition, subtraction and number recognition. Staff made this a fun and enjoyable game. Children show warmth and affection to the care staff and managers and there is a pleasant relaxed ambience in the home.

Young people make excellent progress in their emotional resilience because staff engagement with them guided by placement plans is excellent. Parents and social workers comment on how this leads to a reduction in young people's anxiety and the negative behaviours caused by this.

Young people benefit from access to local facilities such as shops, health care services and recreational facilities. They successfully take part in meaningful community activities such as working in charity shops and the local nature reserve, improving their confidence and community engagement. Young people showed enthusiasm for this work alongside care staff.

Young people respond very well to the structure of the home which has resulted in no sanctions or children missing, and very few restraints. Staff demonstrate an excellent rapport with the young people and a clear understanding of how to communicate with each young person ensuring their personal care needs and preferences are met.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people are happy in the home and present as relaxed and trusting with staff. Parents and social workers praise the work of staff saying they can tell by the young people's enthusiasm to go there and by their body language that they are safely cared for.

Young people are appropriately protected by a range of safeguarding measures, such as staff trained in child protection for young people with a disability and systems to deal with child protection issues or complaints. Staff are knowledgeable about these procedures and are clear about their role in safeguarding young people.

Most young people are never restrained as staff use a wide range of alternative techniques to defuse situations. Staff are appropriately trained in dealing with

disruptive behaviour including restraint to safely contain young people on the rare occasions this has occurred. Recording of restraints does not make it clear how long different interventions occur for, making it potentially difficult to analyse and improve practice. Staff modify risk assessments and behaviour management plans after restraint situations seeking to learn from each event, reduce it's reoccurrence and aid in safely caring for the young people.

Young people's safety in the home is enhanced through regular testing and monitoring of all electrical, gas and fire equipment. Health and safety guidelines are rigorously followed and there are comprehensive risk assessments to aid in keeping young people safe from hazards in the home and when on activities.

Children are protected by generally good staff recruitment procedures although telephone checking of references does not always occur. Children sometimes require assistance with intimate personal care and staff follow strict guidelines in providing this care to them. Young people undertake as much of their personal care as they can to enhance their independence and self help skills. One parent commented that, 'They are really good at personal care, I have nothing but positives to say about them.'

Leadership and management

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

Young people live in a well-managed home and enjoy care provided in line with its Statement of Purpose and Function. Staffing levels are excellent with regular supervision and training provided to enhance the care given to young people. The registered manager ensures all staff are aware of changes in legislation and is making arrangements for them to undertake the level 3 Children & Young People's Workforce Diploma. The recommendation from the previous inspection had been enacted appropriately, improving safety and lessening potential risk for young people.

The registered manager has an excellent understanding of the home's strengths and weaknesses clearly identifying progress in young people and service developments to improve this. The development plan and monitoring of the service do not reflect the quality of management interventions and provide limited aid in improving the quality of care of young people. Due to the registered managers overview this has not impacted negatively on the young people to date but tracking of positive outcomes will be improved by the modifications to the plan and the monitoring of the home's function.

Young people's records are clear and well maintained which contributes to a clear understanding of their progress, individual experiences and activities when they are at the home. All records are securely stored in the office to protect young people's confidentiality.

Young people's care and the conduct of the home has not previously been subject to

monitoring by regulation 33 visits. the registered manager is aiming to commission these monitoring visits and to conduct regulation 34 audits to maintain or improve the service to young people and to provide an additional safeguard for them.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.