

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Maria McGranaghan
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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

This home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to five young people of either gender who are aged from five to 17 years and who have learning disabilities.

Overall effectiveness

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

Young people live in a caring and supportive environment that enables them to make good progress. They are achieving good outcomes in education, social mobility and making transitions into adulthood.

Young people are safe and feel protected from significant harm. They are positive about the care they receive and the relationships they have formed with staff that are based on mutual respect and a clear understanding of individual abilities.

Communication tools offer a good level of support to young people enabling their wishes and feelings to be heard and understood. All aspects of care planning and practice needs are specifically personalised to address the individual needs of the young people. Specifically, staff work in a coordinated way and in partnership with parents and external agencies to support the overall care planning process. This practice ensures a regular holistic review of the care plan, including if the home continues to meet the complex and changing needs of the young people.

Young people are looked after by competent and appropriately trained staff that are committed to providing good outcomes. Staff have developed a detailed knowledge of each young person, this being an essential element to supporting their individual complexities.

The home is managed in accordance with the needs of the young people and the manager places the emphasis on providing good quality care that is consistently reviewed. The manager makes good use of the monitoring systems and uses these to make change where necessary. However, some records such as key work sessions and consultation documents lacked detail. Similarly evidence of equality and diversity being addressed in the home did not fully support the individual identity needs of the young people.

The manager has made good progress in addressing the recommendations made at the last inspection. Specifically, risk assessments are in place to ensure bullying is suitably monitored in the home. However, due to changes in the staff team there is a deficit in all staff being qualified at National Vocational Qualification level 3.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure young people receive personalised care that promotes all aspects of their individual identity and are treated as individuals rather than a member of the group (NMS 2.1)
- ensure sanctions are clear, reasonable and fair and are understood by all staff and young people (NMS 3.8)
- ensure all children communicate their views on all aspects of their care and support (NMS 1.2)
- ensure young people can take up issues in the most appropriate way with support and without fear that this will result in any adverse consequences. Young people receive prompt feedback on any concerns or complaints and are kept informed of the progress. Specifically young people must have access to a complaints procedure adapted to meet their individual needs. (NMS 1.6)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people have made significant developments in areas of education, communication, social awareness and integration. They have good opportunities to explore their community and surrounding areas with the support of a committed staff team. Staff have a good understanding of young people's everyday routines this coupled with daily living plans help to support young people to understand the plans for each day.

Young people are supported to understand their environment and particular circumstance by the use of communication aids such as, story boards and signs. Young people's sensory needs are well managed. They enjoy a pleasurable individual sensory diet that encourages them to feel, taste, and smell different foods. This practice enables young people to make informed choices about the home's menus and the foods they like to eat. Communication aids are adapted to suit individual need and this helps to maximise individual potential.

Staff support young people to live and lead healthy lives. Detailed health care plans capture individual health needs and are supported by regular practitioner assessments. Medication is robustly monitored and effectively administered ensuring that young people receive the correct amount in accordance with their health needs. Young people's psychological and emotional well-being is also regularly reviewed and changes in behaviour or mannerisms are reported and action taken where

appropriate.

Young people have made good progress in the area of education. The home maintains daily links including offering additional support within the classroom to assist young people to develop the skills to cope in different situations. As a result school reports highlight continuous progress for all young people.

Young people enjoy a range of recreational activities, including horse riding, drama, walking and swimming. Similarly, young people have ample opportunity to explore their sensory development within the home using a range of sensory aids. Risk assessments for all activities are in place and this helps ensure young people's individual complexities are taken into account and their safety maintained. For many, these experiences are unique. Staff said, 'affording young people different types of experiences enhances their overall confidence and develops a willingness to try different things'. Photographs of young people taking part and enjoying various activities gives a clear indication of the trust they have developed in the staff team and their growing confidence in trying out different activities.

Young people have regular contact with their families. Individual contact arrangements are suitably agreed and recorded thus providing a transparent contact plan. Parents and social workers receive monthly reports and are encouraged to comment on the care their child receives. It is clear that the relationships developed between the home and families helps to support the overall care management of the young people.

Young people's placement plans identify key areas for specific development, including the enhancement of independent skills. Young people are encouraged and supported to undertake simple tasks by themselves such as getting dressed, washing and making simple food such as a sandwich. Care is taken to provide the right level of support without infringing on the young person's right to take their time or explore the activity in greater detail. Such practice enhances young people's self-esteem and confidence whilst developing their abilities at a suitable individual level.

Quality of care

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

Young people thrive in a stable, nurturing and supportive environment. Staff demonstrate a clear commitment to young people and this is evident in the relationships they have established. Young people and staff enjoy banter and are clearly relaxed in each others company.

Young people's positive behaviour and their smallest achievements is recognised and praised by all staff. Visual expression and clear communication coupled with story boards and signs assist young people to receive praise while also assisting them to recognise their own achievements. By comparison, staff use a range of de-escalation techniques in order to distract young people from negative behaviour including communication aids in order to ascertain the young people's feelings. Individual

behaviour management plans are in place in order to support the overall management of negative behaviour. However, records of sanctions implemented as a result of such behaviour lack consistency and detail. Consequently the stringent routines needed to support young people to manage their behaviour are not fully in place.

Staff plan for young people's care very well. The objective of young people's time at the home is clearly outlined to show what young people and staff are working towards. Staff put young people's plans into practice effectively to ensure specific needs are met on a day-to-day basis. Placement plans recognise young people as individuals with different needs and interests. Regular key worker sessions support individual plans and assist young people in meeting their targets. Staff work well with young people's parents and other agencies in order to consistently monitor progress. This practice takes into account changes in their lives and helps to identify the best way to support young people.

Young people and their families have access to the home's complaint procedure. Key work sessions assist young people to express their feelings and understand their rights to make a complaint. However, the complaints procedure is not available in a format suitable for all young people to access independently. Specifically, the written procedure does not take into account the limited reading abilities of young people resident in the home. Consequently young people are not afforded suitable access to a procedure designed to meet their individual needs.

Young people are encouraged to participate in making decisions about their care. For example, staff support young people to make decisions about the clothes they wish to wear, the activities they wish to pursue and the meals they like to eat. Story boards and picture cards assist young people to communicate their needs effectively and are used to assist young people plan their day. Individual routines are clearly displayed ensuring young people know what is happening each day. One young person said 'when I have done an activity I will take off my card and then I know what I am doing next, it helps me to remember everything'.

Young people's placement plans identify basic information regarding individual heritage and identity. Nonetheless through consultation with parents and social worker they are encouraged to pursue their individual beliefs and are offered a range of material to develop their understanding of individual choice. The home provides a range of foods from wholesome traditional British dishes to international cuisine. This practice supports young people to try different tastes and textures, unique to their previous experiences. As a result the home is demonstrating a growing commitment to ensuring young people with complex difficulties are afforded equal opportunities within their home and local community.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people receive a high level of support in order to maintain their overall safety

and well-being, as a result there have been no young people missing from home. Positive behaviour is both promoted and rewarded and has been complemented by external agencies on the progress young people are making. One young person said 'I used to kick off but now I will spend time in my room or do another activity until I settle down'.

The home maintains a restraint policy although operates a minimum restraint plan. There has been a significant decrease in restraints occurring in the home. Staff respond quickly and effectively to unpredictable behaviour and ensure the safety of both the young person in crisis and the other young people. As a result records of restraint taking place provide a clear picture of the behaviours preceding the intervention and the calming approach used afterwards. Consequently young people feel safe and know that staff are there to support and protect them.

The home maintains policies and procedures for the protection of young people living in the home. Similarly, staff are appropriately trained in order to respond quickly and efficiently to allegations or suspicion of abuse. Staff acknowledge young people's vulnerabilities including communication difficulties that can serve to hamper a young person's ability to make their feelings known. Effective communication aids and good relationships with parents and external agencies promote a holistic approach in keeping young people safe.

The home employs a robust recruitment procedure that ensures young people are only cared for by staff that are appropriately checked in order to work in the home. Visitors are appropriately vetted and this helps to make sure that young people are protected while in their home.

Young people live in a spacious and well equipped home that focuses on the complex needs of the young people. Health and safety risk assessments are regularly reviewed and internal checks are consistently undertaken in order to maintain the overall safety of the young people. Young people have individualised bedrooms designed to meet their needs. One young person said, 'I like spending time in my room, I like to look at books and pictures, I like my room'.

Leadership and management

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

Young people live in a home that is suitably managed in their best interests. The home meets the aims and objectives of the Statement of Purpose, and young people, families and social workers are clear about the services and support the home provides.

The manager and staff demonstrate a strong commitment to delivering good child care practice tailored to the individual and personal needs of the young people they look after. The effectiveness of this approach is measurable in the good progress young people have made within education and social integration.

The manager makes good use of reflective practice, the views of families, social workers and staff are consistently taken into account to ensure young people's needs are appropriately met. The home shows the capacity to improve based on the progress most young people have made since the last inspection.

Internal and external monitoring systems provide the home with a consistent approach to the overall monitoring of care. Detailed information highlights areas for development and the action plan produced by the manager details the methods used to enhance the service. Staff receive an appropriate level of support and consistent supervision. Likewise, a comprehensive training package ensures that staff are suitably equipped to manage the complexities of young people living in the home. One staff member said, 'we are well supported and we also support each other as we are a close staff team. The training is fantastic we couldn't ask for better'. The manager said 'we have a good team who really understand the young people they work hard and want the best for them. The young people and staff all get along really well'.

The home is decorated to a good standard and offers spacious internal accommodation to the young people. The external grounds are equipped with a trampoline and activity area for the young people to enjoy during the dry days. Ample toys and games are easily accessible and support young people to play and develop their own personality.

Young people's records are appropriately stored and updated. However, some information lacked clarity and some of the important work being undertaken with young people was not recorded on file. Consequently, this practice serves to hamper the evaluation of care practices in the home.

The manager is aware of the procedure for notifying Ofsted of incidents under Regulation 30, Schedule 5. However, there have been no such incidents requiring such notification in the home.

Equality and diversity practice is **satisfactory**.