

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Pete Hylton
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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 operated by a local authority provides accommodation for up to seven young people between 10 and 17 years. They have complex social, emotional and developmental needs and moderate to severe learning or physical disabilities. Some young people attend the home on a respite or part-time basis.

Overall effectiveness

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

This is a good children home with outstanding features. Young people are cared for by a strong and committed staff team.

Exceptional progress is made by young people in all areas of their lives. School attendance and achievement is excellent, although communication between home and school is not always fully effective. Activities in the home and community are appropriate and enjoyed by the young people. Choice is actively promoted and young people are routinely involved in making decisions affecting their care.

Young people are safe and arrangements to keep them safe are excellent. Concerns are swiftly acted upon and staff are knowledgeable about the procedures. Restraint is used only where necessary. There are no sanctions given to young people and positive behaviour is regularly rewarded. However, the recording system for restraint does not meet the regulations.

The environment is adapted well to meet the needs of the young people. The use of symbols supports improvements in the communication skills of young people although these are not used for menus.

Young people are offered a variety of healthy and nutritious foods. Young people have a range of medical needs and staff meet these consistently. Medication is appropriately administered although the storage of medicine is not totally secure. Overall, fire safety is good although two fire escape routes are not totally free from potential hazards.

A good quality training plan ensures staff development needs are regularly reviewed. However, not all staff are trained to level three. All staff are thoroughly vetted and checked. Leadership and management is good and the home has clear plans for improvement.

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
17A (2001)	ensure that a measure of restraint is only used on a child accommodated in children's home for the purpose of preventing injury or serious damage to property. This specifically relates to the recording system used by the home (Regulation 17(a)(1))	18/11/2011
21 (2001)	ensure that any medicine which is kept in a children's home is stored in a secure place so as to prevent any child accommodated there having unsupervised access to it (Regulation 21 (2)(a))	18/11/2011
32 (2001)	ensure that adequate means of escape is provided in the event of fire. This specifically relates to the two fire exits at the side of the house. (Regulation 32(1)(b))	18/11/2011

Recommendations

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

- ensure that all children communicate their views on all aspects of their care and support. This specifically relates to the use of supported communication at mealtimes (NMS 1.3)
- ensure that where any sanctions, disciplinary measures or restraint are used, children are encouraged to have their views recorded in the records kept by the home (NMS 3.18)
- ensure that the home maintains regular contact with each child's school, college and other education settings (NMS 8.6)
- ensure that all existing care staff have attained a minimum level 3 qualification. (NMS 18.5).

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people make excellent progress within education. They benefit from excellent attendance and staff fully support them in making progress. Young people have clear routines supported by school and the home. This means that improvements in behaviour positively impact on attendance and attainment. A teacher commented

that the 'differences in young people can only be praised'.

There are good relationships between the family and the home. This ensures that young people are supported in maintaining contact with family where appropriate. This benefits the young people as positive contact is arranged and in some cases, this has led to significant improvements in contact for some young people.

Life story work and the creation of memory boxes help young people to understand their backgrounds. Young people have made exceptional progress in their communication and relationships. One parent commented that their child 'is more verbal now. We speak to him on the phone now. Definitely lots of progress'. A social worker commented that a young person had 'made considerable progress in terms of routines, self confidence and personal care'.

Young people are encouraged to develop independence and make excellent progress in this regard. A parent commented that their child was 'much more independent now. Has made progress and engages with others'. Young people who leave the home make successful transitions to adulthood and attend education.

Health needs are clearly identified and met. Young people make good progress with their health and any concerns are acted on swiftly. All young people are offered healthy meal choices. Young people enjoy cookery sessions with staff where healthy eating is further promoted. Knowledge of different cultures is promoted and the cultural needs of young people are fully met.

Quality of care

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

Young people are cared for by a committed and enthusiastic staff team. Excellent relationships with staff ensure that they make good progress, they are settled and happy. The home offers young people a range of appropriate activities including cooking, soft play, hydrotherapy and a well equipped outdoor area. Young people are able to choose activities and regular outings take place. Staff have worked hard to overcome barriers to young people achieving. For example, young people have taken part in holidays where they have not been able to before.

Regular house meetings ensure that young people's views are recorded and influence the running of the home. They are able to make choices and staff record these meetings in an accessible format. The needs of young people are fully considered in all aspects of care planning.

There is an inclusive atmosphere in the home and this is led by the management team. The deputy manager commented that they 'try to give young people the same experiences as those who live within their own families'. Young people benefit from an ethos of integration not segregation. This is clearly stated around the home in written and symbol format.

The views of young people are not always recorded following any incidents of restraint; however, staff do note any behavioural changes. Young people have specially-adapted behaviour plans which they help to write. These detail how they wish to be treated when they are upset or angry. This, and other examples of consultation, ensures that young people's views influence their care.

Staff work hard to assist young people's communication and the environment is adapted for this purpose. Various communication methods are used and on the whole, young people communicate their wishes and feelings. However, the use of symbol communication at mealtimes is not always used effectively. Symbols are available for meal choices on a board in the dining room. Although the menu is written on a chalkboard, there is no use of symbols to support young people in making their choices. However, symbols are used throughout the home for other activities. Young people do not appear to have adverse outcomes as a result of the lack of symbol support at mealtimes.

Everybody eats together and meal times are a social occasion. Menu planning for the home takes into account the individual dietary needs of young people. All meals are prepared by a cook and are nutritious, healthy and varied. Young people are able to choose from a wide variety of healthy and balanced meals. Regular themed evenings are held and young people are encouraged to try different foods.

All young people attend education and staff support them in making progress. However, effective communication between the home and school is not always maintained. Whilst this has had little impact on the outcomes for young people, there have been occasions where equipment needed for the school day has not been provided. Young people are supported in maintaining excellent attendance and make outstanding progress as a result. Regular meetings ensure that the needs of young people are identified and reviewed.

Young people at the home present with a range of medical needs. A knowledgeable and well-trained staff team administer medication appropriately and effectively. Facilities for the safe storage of medication are, on the whole, secure. However, the keys giving access to the medicines are kept on top of the medication storage cabinet.

Care planning is of a high standard and regularly reviewed. Young people benefit from a knowledgeable staff team who are committed to providing the highest possible levels of care. A social worker commented that 'staff are always knowledgeable about the young people, always answer any questions' and a parent stated that 'they're just brilliant'.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people are safe and feel safe. There are robust systems in place to protect

them from harm and all concerns relating to the welfare of young people are thoroughly and rigorously addressed. All incidents are discussed with managers in the home and behaviour patterns are closely monitored and reviewed by key staff. The staff know how to manage the behaviours of the young people. Progress has been exceptional and young people benefit from excellent staff practice in delivering care.

Young people's behaviour is positively managed. The use of rewards ensures that positive behaviour is recognised. Young people are routinely praised for their achievements and this means that physical intervention is rarely used. Where restraint is used it is always for the reason of preventing harm to people or serious damage to property. Young people are closely monitored at all times and changes in behaviour noted and acted upon. This means that the staff team are able to quickly intervene and support young people where required.

The physical environment is safe and secure without being restrictive. Young people are free to move around the home. All communal areas are kept open with doors which close automatically when the fire alarm is activated. The home does not have an institutional feel and young people are settled and relaxed. All activities are risk assessed in the home and the outdoor play equipment is regularly checked for defects.

The staff team are all thoroughly vetted and well established safeguarding procedures are in place. Young people benefit from an experienced staff team who know how to respond to child protection concerns. Their safety is further enhanced by regular checks of the house vehicle, clear and thorough risk assessment of the home and regular monitoring by both the organisation and the manager.

Leadership and management

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

The Statement of Purpose is clear and the young person's guide is appropriately presented so that young people can understand the contents. All records relating to young people are updated, regularly reviewed and securely stored. Careful recording of all matters relating to young people ensures that parents and social workers are fully updated about progress and concerns. Complaints are rare from young people and complaints from parents are handled effectively and to the benefit of the young person. Inappropriate reasons for restraint can be recorded although this has not happened. This breach in regulation has not led to any negative outcomes for young people

The staff team is well trained and a good overview ensures that all staff are up to date with relevant training. Some care staff are yet to achieve level three qualifications and are not enrolled in these courses. Supervision is regularly given to all staff and is of high quality. Staff feel supported by the management of the home and are clear in their responsibilities. Regular and thorough auditing of young people's files ensures compliance with the regulations.

The home has clear plans for improvement and managers involve staff in developing the home. Regular team meetings ensure excellent communication between the staff. Staff take ownership of key decisions, for example submitting bids for extra funding to purchase a new vehicle, conservatory and soft play. The development plan identifies some strengths and weaknesses.

Health and safety is well managed and young people benefit from a safe and homely environment. An outside wall showing signs of damage is appropriately risk assessed and action is being taken to resolve the problem. However, leaves and debris are not regularly cleared from escape routes to further secure the safety of these routes in the event of an emergency.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.