

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Paul Taylor / Keith Riley
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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 children's home can accommodate up to 26 young people in four separate houses based on the same site. The home caters for young people between the ages of seven and 17 years with a variety of disabilities, primarily epilepsy and learning difficulties. Each unit has the facility to accommodate wheelchair users and has equipment suitable to care for young people with a physical disability as well as learning difficulties. On the same site is a residential special school which the young people attend as day pupils. The home is operated by a registered charity.

Overall effectiveness

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

This home meets young people's needs to a good standard. Plans are highly individualised and demonstrate that the staff are aware of the more diverse and complex needs of the young people. Equality and diversity are clearly valued in the home and the staff provide very effective support for these individual needs.

Young people enjoy nurturing and supportive relationships with the staff, who provide a caring, safe environment with consistent and clear boundaries and routines. Staff are clear about young people's care plans and this allows them to provide personalised, well-planned care, taking into account young people's individual needs. There is a competent and enthusiastic staff team with a wide range of skills and this helps to ensure that young people receive the support they need. The management team clearly understand the strengths and weakness of the service and have a commitment to raising standards.

The health needs of young people are promoted and protected and they are able to access specialist services which meet their needs. There is also a strong focus on healthy living such as healthy eating and exercise. There are excellent systems in place for ensuring that young people are safe.

No actions have been made as a result of this inspection. Two recommendations have been made. These shortfalls do not affect the safety or well-being of the young people. It is recommended that the home ensures that all the young people have access to the same varieties of electronic communication and the medication administration system is reviewed and so that it is more straightforward for the staff to use.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure all staff's work is consistent with the home's policy's and procedures. In particular ensure the system to audit medication is understandable to all members of staff and consistently applied in all the houses (NMS 21.3)
- ensure that appropriate forms of contact are promoted and facilitated for each child, including where appropriate visits to the child, meetings with friends and relatives, letters, exchange of photographs and electronic forms of contact. In particular ensure all young people benefit from the same access to electronic forms of contact. (NMS 9.1)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people benefit from individualised support which helps them grow in confidence and develop their life and social skills. The key-worker system enables young people to achieve targets set out in their care plans. Staff are very aware of young people's vulnerabilities and abilities and help to nurture their interests. Young people enjoy their leisure time by taking part in a variety of activities both on site and in the wider community. Young people visit a range of attractions throughout the area and enjoy holidays away from the home. They benefit from an environment which looks at reasons to expand their experiences and overcome barriers to these. Young people's enrichment and enjoyment are seen as extremely important and careful planning and support takes into consideration their vulnerabilities and individual preferences.

Young people benefit from ready access to a range of health care professionals. Specialist health care professionals such as neurologists, physiotherapists, psychologists, speech and language therapists and occupational therapists are available on site. Healthy living is valued and encouraged in the form of healthy eating and exercise. The level of health care and expertise available to the young people ensures that their health is promoted to a good standard.

All the young people benefit from attending the special school which is situated on the main campus of the organisation. They have close support while they are at the school and make good progress in line with their abilities and potential.

Young people also benefit from carefully planned transitions to their next placements. It is accepted that due to their extreme vulnerabilities and learning disabilities, that they will not live independent lives. However, bearing these issues in mind, the young people receive good support which enables them to develop their life skills and enables them, as much as possible, to prepare for their next

placements when it is time to move on.

Quality of care

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

Young people benefit from good quality care from a professional staff team. There are sensitive and understanding relationships between staff and young people. Staff understand young people's individual strengths, needs and vulnerabilities. There are detailed care plans and the young people's progress and needs are discussed regularly in team meetings and supervision sessions. This approach ensures that young people's needs are kept under review and that care is delivered in an individualised and sensitive manner.

Young people are supported by good healthcare planning and this ensures that their often complex health needs are met to a good standard. They benefit from swift access to specialist health professionals based on site, if they need it. To ensure medical treatments and historic interventions are considered in planning, all young people are supported by well-maintained health records and documentation.

While the recording of administration of medication is accurate, the system used to audit medication is cumbersome and not clearly understood by all members of staff or implemented consistently in all the houses. This has not led to any medication errors and has had no impact on the well-being of the young people, but members of staff are not totally comfortable or confident with the process.

Members of staff are aware of the communication styles for each young person. This ensures that their preferences are known specially with regards to activities, routines and diet. The staff knowledge of each young person enables them to offer close support and a consistent routine. This enables the young people to make choices, as far as their abilities allow, with access to immediate support and guidance.

The young people's cognitive ability means that they do not necessarily understand the concept of what constitutes a formal complaint. However, the staff are aware of how each young person shows displeasure or distress via their communication methods or by reading their behavioural cues. Most complaints are therefore made by parents or carers. Records of these are generally good, although on one occasion the resolution has not been clearly recorded.

Members of staff work closely with the special school based on the same campus. This ensures that the young people are very well supported in their attendance and in attaining targets set out in their individual education programs. Good communication between school staff and the care staff ensures consistency in care and routine for the young people.

Members of staff ensure that the young people have support to take part in enjoyable activities. Individual preferences are known and so members of staff are clear as to what routines need to be followed to enable the young people to enjoy

their activities. There are a very good variety of activities available to the young people both on and off site. These include youth club, worship club, walks to the park, discos and bus rides to places of interest. Additionally the young people have a selection of activities available in their own particular houses. It is clear that the young people benefit from a staff team which supports them to take part in enriching activities which encourage them to be a part of the wider community.

Members of staff work closely with the young people to prepare them to move on from the home when it is time to do so. It is accepted that they will not be able to live independently, but their skills are developed and they are supported and prepared to move on to their next homes in a carefully thought-out manner aimed at a pace with which each young person can cope.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people's safety and well-being is at the heart of all practice in the home. The extreme vulnerabilities of the young people are understood by all members of staff and this ensures that their approach to ensuring their safety is conscientious and rigorous.

The young people are protected from abuse. Staff receive regular training in safeguarding and have a sound understanding on their roles and responsibilities in responding to actual or potential abuse. Regular contact is maintained with the local safeguarding team and any incidents swiftly passed on to them. Detailed records are maintained if there are any incidents which occur and these records include how the situation has been resolved and how the young people's safety has been ensured.

The recruitment process is robust and ensures that only adults who have been appropriately checked and vetted are employed in the home.

No young people have gone missing since the last inspection. There is a clear emergency protocol which is rehearsed regularly to ensure that if a young person goes missing, there will be a swift and thorough response. This protocol has been used as a role model by other organisations.

There are individual behaviour management plans in place for each young person. These ensure that the members of staff supporting them know what situations may trigger distressed or challenging behaviour and what strategies are to be used to support them. The young people's learning disabilities may mean that they do not understand the concept of sanctions and so these are very rarely imposed unless deemed appropriate in their individual plans. Physical intervention is rarely used and if it is, only for very short periods of time. Staff are very conscientious in their recording of incidents. This approach is thorough and ensures that practice is open and constantly reviewed.

The environment is subject to stringent checks and assessments. All specialist equipment is checked regularly and occupational therapists assess each young person's needs to ensure the use of the equipment is appropriate and safe. The home has been subject to a recent fire risk assessment. As yet an action plan has not formally been constructed although any shortfalls identified in the risk assessment are not seen as having an impact on the safety of the young people.

Individual risk assessments clearly identify the particular vulnerabilities of each young person in specific situations and what measures need to be in place to ensure their safety. For example, areas of particular risk, such as bathing and walking around the site or community make it very clear what the staff have to do to protect the young person. It is clear that the staff are acutely aware of the young people's vulnerabilities and know what to do to keep them safe.

Leadership and management

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

The provider meets the aims and objectives in their Statement of Purpose. Staff succeed in providing a stable, structured and very safe environment for young people. Care practices help young people to develop their skills and contribute towards their personal growth. Young people benefit from high staffing ratios enabling them to have the necessary individual attention.

Young people receive care from a well-supported staff team. The organisation demonstrates a commitment to on-going professional development and training. Staff also undertake training on a variety of topics which address the diverse and complex needs of young people. This ensures staff possess the competence needed to undertake their role, have the required individual skills and are up-to-date with professional practice and legal obligations. This is a learning organisation with a well-established induction and training program overseen by the training department.

Young people benefit from effective management. There are various systems to monitor the quality of care. This includes monthly visits by designated persons, in accordance with the regulations. These reports focus on the home's strengths and highlights areas for improvement. The manager understands the strengths and weaknesses of the home and has a development plan in place. There is good compliance to recommendations and actions made at previous inspections carried out by Ofsted.

The home has very effective links with external agencies and promptly informs them of any incidents of note. This ensures that there is an open culture which reflects upon practice with a view to improving outcomes for young people.

Records are stored securely and give a good history of each young person's progress and experiences at the home. Care plans are detailed and address individual needs, whether these are behavioural, medical, cultural or religious, to an excellent standard.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.