

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Janice Hawtin
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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 operated by a private provider; it is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to of four young people with learning disabilities two of whom may have concurrent physical disabilities.

Overall effectiveness

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

The home promotes a sound quality of care in a friendly and welcoming environment. Young people benefit from dedicated staff that are concerned for their welfare and are flexible in the service and support provided to meet individual needs and improve outcomes.

Work is done in partnership with parents especially around moving into the home and on to other services. This maximise the support available to young people who will need continuing care as adults.

Relationships between staff and young people are notably warm and caring. Young people are happy in this home and parents report that the care is 'very good' and 'the staff help to deal with any issues'.

The staff are aware of particular vulnerabilities of young people and work to overcome these. There is a focus on building self esteem and confidence and this has been effective in helping young people make improvements in their lives.

Young people benefit from improved health through consultation with a dietician and the provision of individualised balanced diets. Improvements in confidence have also enabled young people to make choices and work is focussed on developing practical life skills to support positive transitions to adult services.

Young people have been provided with additional individual support through the employment of extra staff at busy times such as during breakfast.

Not all staff have received regular formal supervision. The use of physical restraint and incidents of challenging behaviour are not regularly reviewed and therefore the effectiveness of interventions is not identified or the need for restraint reduced. There is limited potential for reflective practice, personal and practice development and quality assurance without monitoring of incidents and supervision in place.

The complaints policy does not include contact details for Ofsted, parents, staff and young people can not readily access information allowing them to contact the

regulatory body should they have any concerns or compliments.

The fabric of the home needs some attention to repair damage, in particular a shower needs reinstating for the use of young people.

Young people are not provided with computer access including programmes to support education and development.

Other areas for improvement include issues around staff qualifications and providing monitoring reports to Ofsted.

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
34 (2001)	supply to Ofsted a report in respect of any review conducted by the registered person for the purpose of monitoring matters set out in Schedule 6 and to improve the quality of care (Regulation 34)	30/12/2011
24 (2001)	include the name, address and telephone number of Ofsted in the complaints procedure. (Regulation 24 (4)(a))	30/12/2011

Recommendations

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

- ensure that incidents of challenging behaviour are regularly reviewed to examine patterns and trends or emerging issues and enables staff to reflect and learn to inform future practice (NMS 3.21)
- use methods to de-escalate confrontation or potentially violent behaviour when possible to avoid the need for physical restraint. Restraint is only used in exceptional circumstances, to prevent injury to any person or to prevent serious damage to property (NMS 3.13)
- ensure sanctions and rewards for behaviour are clear, reasonable and fair (NMS 3.8)
- provide a comfortable and homely environment that is well maintained and decorated, in particular reinstate the downstairs communal shower (NMS 10.3).
- provide children with access to computer facilities to support education and

maximise each young person's achievement and to minimise any underachievement (NMS 8.4)

- ensure existing staff have attained a minimum level 3 qualifications (NMS 18.5)
- ensure staff have access to support and are provided with regular supervision. (NMS 19.4)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people are helped to develop a positive self view in this environment where they are valued and given opportunities to take part in activities and outings.

Each young person has a life story book with lots of pictures to improve knowledge and understanding of their background. This information has been enhanced for some young people who are due to move on and includes likes and dislikes and how best to ensure the young person is as involved as possible about decisions which affect their lives. Access to this information for future carers improves potential for positive transitions for young people moving on into adult services.

Young people benefit from a staff team who pay attention to their health and respond quickly to any issues or concerns. Consultation with a dietician has led to improved diet and weight gain for some young people. Medication is reviewed to support improved behaviour. For some young people regular check ups and attention to developing positive behaviour has led to a reduction in medication.

Young people gain from regular attendance at school which is 100% with the exception of time off due to sickness. Young people make good educational progress from their starting points at the time of placement.

Young people are actively and positively engaged in activities in the community which allow them to develop skills, improve confidence and mix with peers and make friends. Some young people took part in a three week residential project in the summer with young people from a mainstream education provision. They benefitted from undertaking new activities including mountain climbing, voluntary work and working in teams with other young people in a fully integrated way.

Care is provided in consultation with parents where possible and young people gain from contact with family and friends. Some stay with parents at weekends and during school holiday periods. A parent reported that 'there have been significant improvements in my son's person's eating and personal hygiene skills which has led to more confidence and he is really happy in the home, things are planned for him to do and he is always doing something'.

Young people are supported to develop independence skills appropriate to ability and understanding. This progress is often in very small steps but the staff expect and

work towards all young people making some progress.

Quality of care

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

There are positive and caring relationships between staff and young people; staff are enthusiastic about caring for young people and meeting their changing needs.

Staffing numbers have recently been increased to improve the quality of care and attention to individual and personal care needs.

Care is provided to young people in line with agreed placement plans and risk assessments so that all parties are clear about responsibilities and expectations.

Progress is regularly reviewed by keyworkers to ensure each young person is developing to their full potential and making the most of their time in the home. Detailed independence plans are produced from these reviews and are young person specific. Planning and delivery of independence programmes have enabled a young person to communicate that he wants a drink and another to developing skills so that he can get dressed without help.

Young people benefit from influencing the running of the home and the delivery of care. All young people attend planning and review meetings and are helped to understand the process of decision making. Reports are made available in communication formats which are accessible to the young people. Choice is encouraged and all young people are considered able to make informed choices to enhance self esteem and increase confidence.

Staff implement behaviour management strategies to support young people in developing skills to avoid and manage conflict and to develop positive relationships.

Positive behaviour is encouraged using praise and in providing an environment where success is celebrated, for example by displaying certificates of achievement. Young people do not always benefit from the use of effective sanctions which are sometimes arbitrary and punitive.

Parents commented that the care is 'very good' and are particularly pleased with the attention to supporting young people to move seamlessly on to adult services.

Young people benefit from attendance at school and transport is provided to make sure young people arrive safely. Communication between the schools and home is good ensuring similar methods of encouragement are used in both environments.

Young people have access to the services which meet their emotional, physical and psychological needs. Special adaptations are provided where needed and include a

special seat belt which allows young people who can be violent or dangerous in cars to be transported safely, enabling them to take part in community activities.

Staff support and encourage young people to take part in a good range of community activities which currently include attendance at youth clubs, trips to the seaside and music concerts. Activities enhance skills and development to support education and independence.

Young people benefit from a home that is appropriately located and designed: bedrooms are personalised. There is a large garden with play equipment and a grassy area which can be used for ball games. Not all areas of the home are well maintained, including some damage that has not been repaired: a shower removed from the bathroom wall has not been fixed and locks and window fittings have been removed. This detracts from the provision of a homely environment and limits choices for washing for young people.

The young person's guide details how to make a complaint; no complaints have been made since the last inspection. The complaints policy does not include detail of how to contact Ofsted as the regulatory body should parents or staff have concerns.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people are safe in this home, with appropriate security measures in place to avoid young people who do not understand danger from leaving without staff knowledge.

Young people benefit from care plans which clearly identify risk and protective factors so that staff understand particular vulnerabilities and how to keep individuals safe.

Staffing numbers and the provision of waking night staff reduce the potential for bullying between residents. Pre-placement group compatibility assessments determine the suitability of young people being placed together and decrease the potential for young people to have a negative impact on one another.

Positive relationships are discernable between staff and young people and where able they communicate readily with staff. They also have the support of parents and other family members who take a particular interest in their care and welfare which protects young people should they communicate feeling unsafe. Staff can recognise behaviour which indicates a young person is anxious and will take action to make sense of this and try to change things.

The use of restraint has not been subject to effective monitoring and there is currently no strategy to reduce incidents and make behaviour management as positive as possible for young people. Some use of restraint is avoidable being a

direct result of young people objecting to staff methods of dealing with difficult behaviour.

The home has clear policies and a joint protocol with the police for dealing with young people who go missing. Young people do not go missing from this home.

Young people are protected because all staff working in the home are carefully selected and monitored and only vetted visitors are allowed unsupervised access to young people. Staff are trained in dealing with safeguarding issues and understand what to do to protect young people should they have any concerns or deal with allegations.

The environment is physically safe and secure. Young people have been involved in fire drills so they know what to do in the event of a fire. Regular health and safety checks are completed so that any issues can be identified and dealt with quickly to keep young people safe.

Leadership and management

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

The manager understands the strengths and weaknesses of the service and has a development plan in place.

The manager and staff have kept up to date with recent legislative changes and have an action plan in place to improve the quality of the service.

Some requirements from the previous inspection have been acted upon and have resulted in improvements in staffing levels to benefit young people. In addition information which protects young people from carers who are not considered fit to work with vulnerable young people has been provided and is available for scrutiny by Ofsted. The complaints policy has been reviewed but still does not contain the contacts details of the regulatory body although this was a recommendation of the last inspection.

The statement of purpose is clear, accessible and comprehensive, accurately describing the services and faculties provided by the home. A young person's guide is available in different formats to provide clear information that can be understood by young people with learning difficulties.

Young people benefit from the sound quality of safe care provided by a staff team who have undertaken a comprehensive induction programme and undertake mandatory training. Staff have annual appraisals and personal development plans which contribute to the quality of care provided. Not all staff have or are working towards a professional qualification to ensure that a qualified and competent team looks after young people.

Formal staff supervision does not take place regularly, resulting in insufficient

reflection on practice which limits the managerial responses to any concerns or issues.

Young people's records are clearly identified and kept securely to protect young people's confidentiality and contribute to an understanding of their needs and the progress they are making.

There are records of regular visits under regulation 33 of the Children's Homes Amendment) Regulations 2011, and there is evidence that young people have been present during these visits so the quality of care can be observed. These visits have identified some issues that are also highlighted in this report; unfortunately this monitoring has not always resulted in changes in practice, limiting their effectiveness in improving practice and ensuring compliance with legislation. Regulation 34 reports have not been provided to Ofsted potentially compromising the independent quality assurance systems designed to protect young people.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.