

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Paul Taylor
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This children's home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to 16 children and young people who have a learning difficulty.

The service is privately owned. A respite/short break service is provided and young people may stay in the home on an independence programme until the age of 25.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: a service of exceptional quality that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

Good: a service of high quality that exceeds minimum requirements

Adequate: a service that only meets minimum requirements

Inadequate: a service that does not meet minimum requirements

Overall effectiveness

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

This is a well managed and effective service. Young people make excellent progress in this home and thrive as a result of the consistent, supportive and nurturing environment. They receive well planned and individualised care and their views and needs are seen as central to the practice of the home. Staff are committed to providing high quality care and this promotes positive outcomes for young people, particularly when bearing in mind their starting points and disabilities. Staff have high aspirations for young people and this contributes to young people's positive progress.

The home has robust monitoring systems and is reflective in its practice. The management team actively seeks the views of all stake holders and identifies areas of weakness and points to develop. Young people report feeling very well cared for and supported and confirm that they have made progress while living at the home. 'They have helped me, I get on with my mum now' was a comment made by a young person.

Very good links are maintained with stakeholders and statutory agencies. A social worker commented: 'They have bent over backwards to work with other professionals.' A parent said: 'I wouldn't want my child to live anywhere else.' The home effectively pursues any incidents relating to young people's safety and well being.

Shortfalls identified during this inspection have not had an impact on the well being and welfare of the young people. Proof of staff qualifications is not consistently recorded and the home's updated child protection procedure has not yet been endorsed by the local safeguarding team. At times, recently updated behaviour management strategies have not been implemented consistently.

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
26 (2001)	ensure that full and satisfactory information is available in relation to any person employed in respect of each of the matters specified in Schedule 2 (5) i.e. documentary evidence of any relevant qualifications. (Regulation 26 (3) (d))	31/08/2012

Recommendations

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

- ensure that staff consistently meet children's emotional and behavioural needs, as set out in their care plan (NMS 3.7)
- ensure that the provider's child protection procedures are submitted for consideration and comment to the Local Safeguarding Children's Board and to the Local Authority Designated Officer. (NMS 20.4)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people make excellent progress during their time in the home, especially when taking into account their starting points at the time of admission.

Young people benefit from being able to make trusting relationships with members of staff. They are offered close support, and this enables them to feel safe and supported and to develop their personal skills and life skills to their full potential. 'They do their best for you and they're good cooks' was a comment made by a young person.

Young people prosper from having their health needs promoted to an excellent standard. Specifically, they have their emotional and psychological well being nurtured and promoted and protected to an exceptional standard. The young people benefit from having any specific health needs met in a sensitive and supportive manner.

Young people benefit from living in a home where their views and feelings and welfare are seen as central to practice. They gain from being able to voice their opinions in a number of ways, both formally and informally. Their different methods of communication are valued and understood by the committed staff team.

Young people make significant progress with their education. They gain from living in an environment where their progress is valued, promoted and celebrated and their educational outcomes significantly improve, especially when bearing in mind their starting points and disabilities. Attendance at school for young people is excellent, and young people benefit from living in an environment where school attendance and the value of education and development of life and social skills are embedded in the culture.

Additionally, young people are encouraged and enabled to take part in positive and enriching activities in the community. They receive very careful and sensitive support if they need it in order to attend some activities. As a result of this, young people's social skills and confidence make a marked improvement, especially when bearing in mind their starting points. 'My child has a life now, she's doing things that she never did' were the words of one parent.

The consistent structure and strategies put in place to support the young people to manage their behaviour enables them to become more settled. This leads to a significant decrease in volatile and challenging behaviours. Young people benefit from intensive and well thought out staff support.

Young people benefit significantly from well prepared plans to develop their life skills and independence, where this is appropriate. These plans outline what support and strategies are needed in order to assist them to develop their life and independence skills to their fullest potential.

Quality of care

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

A committed and conscientious staff team ensures that the young people's well being is at the centre of their practice. Emphasis is placed on developing trusting and supportive relationships so that each young person's progress can be nurtured and improved.

Staff have high aspirations for the young people they care for and seek to overcome any boundaries to enable them to prosper and thrive. For example, staff will closely supervise and support young people in activities in the community so that they are

able to have and enjoy enriching and positive experiences, such as holidays and adventure days out. Close and effective liaison with their educational placements also ensures that the young people achieve excellent levels of attendance and that their achievements and progress are shared and celebrated.

The staff team value and support each young person's views and opinions. Members of staff are sensitive to how each young person prefers to communicate and great care is taken to understand each young person's preferences and choices. All young people attend house meetings which are presented and facilitated in a method appropriate and commensurate to their ability and understanding. Due to the learning disabilities of some of the young people, not all of them have the cognitive ability to understand the concept of what constitutes a formal complaint. However, some people are aware of how to complain and to whom. Complaints made by the young people are responded to effectively and promptly, and responses are addressed to them in the formats in which they communicate. Young people report that feel listened to and taken seriously.

Individual care plans identify in detail how each young person should be supported and what strategies need to be in place in order to help the young person grow and progress. Records show each young person's progress and how they are benefitting from living at the home, for example, the lessening of volatile incidents and the development of life skills such as cooking and personal care. 'I don't break so many things now' was a comment made by a young person. Each young person's individual identity is valued and any specific needs and idiosyncrasies are known and met to an excellent standard.

Young people receive excellent health care and have their emotional and psychological well being promoted to a particularly high standard. The home actively pursues appointments with health care specialists if needed and will advocate strongly on behalf of them in order to improve their access to services, such as Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). The system to monitor the administration of medication is robust, accurate and regularly audited. This ensures that all the young people receive their correct doses of medication at the right times.

The staff work closely with other agencies in order to promote young people's progress. Close contact with placing social workers ensures that planning and progress, as well as vulnerabilities, can be discussed and responded to proactively. 'She has blossomed while living there and they keep me up to date with everything' was a comment made by one social worker. 'I have not experienced better communication from a service' was another comment made by a social worker.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

An excellent culture of safety ensures young people are kept as safe as possible. Safeguarding young people is of paramount importance with efficient systems being implemented effectively in practice. Young people say they feel safe living in the

home. Staff receive child protection training and display a sound understanding of key safeguarding issues alongside appreciating the specific vulnerabilities of the young people in their care. A comprehensive recruitment process ensures no staff work with young people unless all the required checks have been completed. Not all recruitment records contain copies of qualifications that staff have achieved prior to commencing work in the home; however, this has had no impact on the safety of the young people.

The home has a very clear protocol to follow in the event that a young person is missing or absent without permission. The protocol has been endorsed by the local police authority. No young people have gone missing and the staff are very aware of their extreme vulnerabilities should they manage to be without adult supervision.

Young people have their challenging behaviours responded to in a safe and individualised manner. Each young person has a detailed risk assessment and behaviour management plan which highlights any problematic or challenging behaviour. The plans guide staff in how to respond to challenging behaviours in line with the young person's specific abilities, understanding and needs. Staff are suitably trained to deal with situations involving the need to intervene physically and only do so when necessary. Additionally, a senior member of staff checks and endorses the records to ensure their accuracy and appropriateness. Monitoring of the plans enables them to be reviewed and amended if it is felt that there should be a change in the strategies used. This ensures that incidents of physical intervention are monitored effectively and the young people's safety maintained to a good level. On occasion, new behaviour management strategies are not consistently applied, particularly when they have been recently modified. This has not affected any young person's progress or safety.

The home has very effective links with external agencies. These ensure that any issues relating to young people's welfare are swiftly passed on, so that protection and support for young people are seen as paramount. Staff display a sound understanding of safeguarding matters, with child protection training included as part of induction and on going refresher training. When issues arise, swift actions are taken to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all involved, including gaining advice from the local safeguarding children's board and liaising closely with placing authorities. The home's child protection procedure has been reviewed and updated; however, the most recent procedure has not been shared with the local safeguarding board for comment and endorsement.

A comprehensive and robust approach is in place to address all areas of health and safety. All required tests and servicing takes place for such areas as gas and electrical installations and appliances, with health and safety checks being carried out weekly by maintenance staff. Full environmental and fire risk assessments are completed annually. Fire safety is given a high priority, with young people involved in evacuations, while alarms and the emergency lighting system are routinely tested and maintained.

Leadership and management

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

The service has an established and experienced management team which provides good oversight and monitoring of the operation of the home. Continuous improvement is achieved by regular and robust assessment of the quality of provision. Stakeholders opinions, including those of young people, parents and placing social workers are gained regularly. This approach encourages an open atmosphere where other's opinions are sought and valued.

Monitoring visits are undertaken on a regular basis, and reports written as a result of these, point out any specific shortfalls. A written action plan is then put in place to show how these have been rectified. The home has a system whereby trends and incidents are analysed. This then informs managers if the home is effectively managing specific areas. The results of this monitoring system have been forwarded to Ofsted. The home's approach is reflective and encourages constant consideration of practice.

A suitable Statement of Purpose is in place with its aims and objectives being met. Staffing levels ensure young people receive excellent consistent support, guidance and care to meet their particular needs. This approach in a nurturing and structured environment enables the young people to progress significantly. Staff are fully aware of their roles and responsibilities with the staffing structure ensuring lines of accountability are clear and effective.

The staff team receive regular and very well planned training which enables them to keep up with developments in practice. This ensures they have the skills, knowledge and confidence to work with the young people that the home accommodates and to offer a very high standard of care. All members of staff receive regular supervision and appraisal. They report excellent support from managers. 'I love it here' was a comment made by a member of staff. The home has also carried out joint training in behaviour management with parents of young people and members of staff. This is to ensure safe and consistent approaches in both the residential setting and while the young people are at home.

The home responds to requirements and recommendations made from previous inspections. Reports on how the home has assessed its monitoring and effectiveness are sent to Ofsted. The home also assesses and evidences how the different age mix in some units is managed and has no detrimental effect on the young people. The home is kept in very good condition and is sufficiently resourced to ensure that young people benefit from good quality furnishings and have their own areas personalised to their choice.

Records maintained give a very good history of each young person's experience of living in the home and show how each young person has progressed and benefited from their placement. All records are stored securely. All significant events are passed on to the relevant agencies promptly and efficiently and a very good record maintained of the incidents and how the home has sought to resolve them. This

shows that the home conscientiously and effectively shares significant information with stakeholders and statutory agencies.

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.