

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC064412
Inspection date	14/08/2012
Inspector	Emeline Evans
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	31/01/2012
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This privately owned home provides care and accommodation for up to six children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

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 **adequate**.

Young people are supported by a stable and experienced staff team, who with the help of the management team, are committed to improving outcomes for the young people. Young people benefit from positive relationships with staff, who understand their complex needs. One professional described the service as, 'quite fantastic, they do a fabulous job'. Young people are supported to make progress with their social development and independence. They access a variety of social and leisure opportunities, which further enhances their self-esteem. Young people are happy and settled in their environment; it is apparent that they benefit from caring members of staff who know them well.

Young people comment that they feel safe and parents reiterate this. Young people live in a secure environment. However, an area for improvement is to seek advice from the local fire and rescue service with regard to the use of the front door as a fire escape route. Other matters for improvement include strengthening the procedures for the recording and storage of young people's medications, staff induction, supervision, training, and some aspects of monitoring.

Other shortfalls identified primarily relate to records that are not fully maintained and policies and procedures that have not been kept up to date which have the potential to impact on outcomes for young people. This is a reflection on the priority of the management team to meet the day-to-day needs of the young people accessing the service. The manager is aware of the home's weaknesses and is committed to further improve outcomes for young people.

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
4 (2001)	revise the Statement of Purpose to include details of the qualifications and experience of persons working at the home and the services to be provided for the children (Regulation 4(1))	24/09/2012
16 (2001)	update the safeguarding policy and procedure (Regulation 16(1)(2))	24/09/2012
17B (2001)	ensure that any measure of control, restraint or discipline is kept as a written record in a volume kept for the purpose and includes the information detailed in Regulation 17B (Regulation 17B(3)(a-i) and Regulation 17B (4)(a-b))	24/09/2012
21 (2001)	ensure that there is secure evidence of the safe arrangements for the recording and storage of medications (Regulation 21(1))	24/09/2012
32 (2001)	consult with the fire and rescue authority to ensure that adequate precautions are taken against the risk of fire; in particular, that appropriate measures are in place to ensure the front door can be used as a means of escape (Regulation 32(1)(a))	15/08/2012
33 (2001)	ensure the person carrying out the visits shall interview with their consent and in private, children accommodated there and their parents and people working at the home as appears necessary in order to form an opinion of the standard of care provided in the home. (Regulation 33(4)(a))	24/09/2012

Recommendations

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

- ensure that where children with disabilities have specific communication needs the registered manager makes arrangements to support their communication, so that they are able to make their views known about the running of the home (Volume 5, statutory guidance, paragraph 2.25)
- ensure all staff are trained in the use of physical restraint techniques and only use the home's agreed techniques, and training is regularly refreshed (NMS 3.15)
- ensure new staff undertake the Children's Workforce Development Council's induction standards (NMS 18.3)
- ensure existing care staff are working towards the Children and Young People's

Workforce Diploma (NMS 18.5)

- ensure all staff have their performance individually and formally appraised at least annually (NMS 19.6)
- submit the updated child protection policies to the Local Safeguarding Children Board (NMS 20.4)
- ensure the manager monitors all records to identify any patterns or trends in order to improve the quality of care provided. (NMS 21.2)

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 promotes all aspects of their individual identity. Staff are skilled at understanding the individual ways young people express their needs. This practice ensures young people's emotional well-being is central to all aspects of care planning and behavioural management. One professional commented: 'The service is quite fantastic and they work extremely well in promoting young people's independence.'

The staff encourage and support young people to make healthy lifestyle choices through physical exercise and a nutritious diet. Young people are involved in contributing to the menu and are supported in food preparation; this assists in developing independent skills. Meal times are seen as social occasions and provide an opportunity to develop new social skills, and young people are encouraged and supported to make decisions in order to maximise their independence.

Young people engage in a variety of activities in the community and are encouraged to learn and try new experiences. Staff ensure young people make good use of age-appropriate local amenities such as parks, swimming pools, bowling and a youth club. This gives young people the opportunities for social interaction to be further enhanced. One young person commented, 'there are lots of things to do here.' Staff ensure that the young people are able to access a range of stimulating and appropriate opportunities both within the home and in the local community.

Young people's educational needs are well supported; staff ensure there is good communication with the school and attend educational reviews as appropriate. Staff work closely with teachers to ensure consistency is achieved. This holistic approach ensures young people are provided with the support and encouragement to reach their individual goals. Staff have worked closely to support young people with the transitions to and from school. This allows the young people to be more relaxed at stressful transition times and therefore maintain good attendance levels at school.

Effective communication between staff and parents ensures key messages about the care and welfare of the young person are properly addressed. The home has regular contact with parents through telephone calls and emails. Young people's parents and social workers are extremely pleased with the ways in which staff support the young

people and how they work together to achieve realistic outcomes. One parent commented: 'Communication is very good and this enables us to work together to achieve individual goals for my daughter.'

There is a focus on developing young people's independent living skills; this has resulted in young people learning new skills such as shopping, self-help skills, cooking and washing. Young people are developing well in this area and this is contributing to enhancing their self-esteem. These achievements are enabling young people to develop new skills in the preparation for the transition to adult life. Staff recognise the progress made in this area and this is reiterated by the young people and their parents.

Quality of care

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

Relationships between the staff group and young people are a real strength of the service. Young people benefit from supportive relationships from committed and experienced staff. Young people are supported to develop socially acceptable behaviours through consistent messages and role modelling.

Staff generally attempt to gain the views of young people in the running of the home; individual choice is established in relation to food and activities. The young people use various methods of communication. Staff have sufficient knowledge to ascertain the views and feelings of young people about the service, however, these views are not being recorded and reflected upon in ways to improve the service. Young people report that they know how to make a complaint and there is a child-friendly complaints form available. One young person commented, 'I can talk to staff if I want to.' Since the last inspection, no complaints have been made.

Young people's needs are central in all aspects of care planning. Placement plans are indicative of the young people's complex needs and identify cultural needs and personal identity. Staff are familiar with young people's plans and they are used fluidly across the shifts. This practice ensures consistency is achieved.

Young people's health needs are being met. Staff encourage and support young people to attend health appointments. The arrangements for the administration of medication are sound. However, all the medications are currently locked in a filing cabinet in the office; this is not appropriately secure, and controlled medications are not presently being recorded in a controlled drugs register. Improvements are required to strengthen systems in place and for compliance with the home's own policies, procedures, and Royal Pharmaceutical Society guidance. Young people's complex health care needs are managed well by the staff. There is appropriate attention provided to any emerging or ongoing health or emotional need.

The home is situated in a residential area within easy reach of local facilities. Young people enjoy their stay in a safe and pleasant environment; there are photos of the young people having fun displayed around the home. The accommodation provides

ample space for group and individual activities. The sensory development for young people is enhanced through the use of a sensory room. One young person commented, 'I like to listen to my music in here (the sensory room) – it's relaxing.'

Safeguarding children and young people

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

The routines and structure in place for individual young people during their stay support them in feeling safe and comfortable in their surroundings. Young people say they feel safe in the home and parents feel that their child's safety is given a high priority.

Staff receive regular training in safeguarding and recognise particular vulnerabilities relating to young people with disabilities. As a result, staff demonstrate a good understanding of the action to take should they have concerns about a young person's well-being. There is a wide range of safeguarding policies and procedures in place, including anti-bullying and missing from care. However, the written policy regarding safeguarding is out of date and does not contain current information. It was also unclear if links with the local authority safeguarding team have been made. The supervision provided by the high levels of staff minimises the risk of young people going missing. Procedures are known by the staff if an incident should arise.

Care planning documentation clearly identifies risks and preventative measures and young people have individual behaviour plans in place. These set out strategies to deal with difficult behaviour and the possible function of such behaviours. The home gains advice from professionals with regard to de-escalating challenging situations without the use of restraint. This has led to a reduction in the use of physical intervention. The home has provided training on managing challenging behaviours including the use of restraint. However, not all staff have completed the same training. This could lead to an inconsistency in managing difficult behaviours within the staff team. Records are made of measures of physical intervention and there is a bound log in place. However, the bound log does not capture all the required information in the relevant regulation and this makes it difficult to fully monitor the effectiveness of the interventions.

The home has a sound recruitment process in place, which ensures all the necessary checks are completed before a member of staff starts work. This protects young people from having contact with unsuitable people.

The servicing and routine checks of fire safety systems, equipment and gas and electric installations take place as required. There are risk assessments in place, both environmental and individual to the young people. However, a fire safety audit highlighted an area for attention. This related to the front door and how this would be used as an exit in the event of fire; there is presently a keypad in operation. There is no evidence that the home has met this requirement. The home is unsure how to proceed and therefore is required to seek advice from the local fire and rescue service, to ensure adequate precautions are taken against the risk of fire.

Leadership and management

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

Young people benefit from a Registered Manager and staff team who are committed to improvements and have high aspirations for the young people they support. The manager has recently appointed a deputy to strengthen the management team within the home. They are beginning to work collaboratively to focus on areas for development of the service and are enthusiastic about progressing forward. There is a clear development plan in place, with a focus on improving outcomes for the young people. This is child-focused and encompasses the commitment of the staff team.

The Registered Manager has addressed the requirement raised at the last Ofsted inspection. The reports of the visits conducted under Regulation 33 are now being sent to Ofsted. An independent visitor to the home undertakes these monitoring visits monthly. However, the monitoring visitor does not routinely consult with young people or staff. Parents and stakeholders are also not interviewed as part of the visit in order for the monitoring visitor to form an opinion of the standard of care provided in the home. Reports are brief and do not fully evaluate the service or provide actions for the home. This could mean that shortfalls in the care of young people are not being recognised and addressed. The Registered Manager monitors and audits practice in the home. Although it is clear monitoring takes place by the Registered Manager, the information gathered is not well used to improve the quality of care provided.

A comprehensive Statement of Purpose is in place and this clearly outlines the aims and objectives of the service. There is a clear emphasis on working in partnership with the young people, parents and outside professionals to achieve a consistent approach to meet the needs of the young people. However, the Statement of Purpose does not include details of the staff team, including their relevant qualifications and experience. In addition, the document does not reflect the current use of the home in providing both long-term placements and short breaks. However, the staff team are very clear on how this is achieved in practice and the management team ensure the young people's individual needs are a priority.

Staffing levels are good and the staff team works together to cover any gaps; this ensures that young people receive consistent care from people who know them well. Young people are supported by a staff team who are knowledgeable and experienced. Staff benefit from regular supervision and staff meetings, ensuring they have the opportunity to raise any issues as they arise. However, there is inconsistency in the annual appraisals taking place; some staff have not received an appraisal in the last year. This means the staff performance over the year is not fully evaluated. Staff are equipped with the necessary skills to support young people through a regular training programme. However, staff who have been with the company for longer than six months are not yet working towards the Children and Young People's Workforce Diploma. New staff undertake the home's induction programme; the home does not presently offer staff the Children's Workplace

Development Council's induction standards. This shortfall does not ensure new staff are up to date with current practice and legislation.

Young people's files are stored securely and contain documents which are relevant and contribute to an understanding of the young person's life. This helps staff in supporting young people to understand their background.

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.