

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Maureen Hamer
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The provision is a children's home and short break provision that is run by a local authority. The home is able to accommodate up to 14 children and young people of either sex, aged between four and under 18 years of age who have a learning disability, including those who have additional more complex or challenging needs.

In addition, the home provides a day care service for up to 10 children during weekends and school holiday periods.

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**.

The home has increased the number of young people it is accommodating on a long term basis and has reduced the number of young people that have short breaks. It is operating within its conditions of registration. The home has a caring and long standing staff group that provide consistent care to young people. Young people show improvements in managing their anxieties and there is a reduction in self harm. However the change process is challenging to staff, in particular young people's plans are not comprehensive, progress is not regularly monitored and records are not always signed or dated. In addition young people's involvement in their own care and in the development of the home is not well demonstrated.

Young people are well supervised but risk assessments and behaviour strategies are not comprehensive. Effectiveness of measures of control and discipline are not monitored and evidence of debriefs is not always completed.

Quality assurance monitoring has greatly improved however the views of young people their parents and placing authorities are not used to inform this monitoring. Some young people's bedroom doors have door sensors but details of their use is not outlined in the young person's care plan. The children's guide does not contain contact details of the young person's independent reviewing officer or Ofsted.

There has been some improvements made to the home and gardens but many areas of the accommodation are less homely.

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)	up-date the home's Statement of Purpose so that it consists of a statement as to the matters listed in Schedule 1 (Regulation 4 (1) Schedule 1)	28/02/2013
17B (2001)	ensure that within 24 hours of the use of any measure of control or discipline in a children's home, a written record is made in a volume kept for the purpose of which shall include the details of the behaviour leading to the use of the measure; description of the measure; in particular the effectiveness and any consequences of the use of the measure (Regulation 17B (3) (f))	28/12/2012
17B (2001)	complete within 24 hours of the use of any measure of control, restraint or discipline in a children's home, a written record is made in a volume kept for the purpose of which shall include- confirmation that the person authorised by the registered provider to make the record has spoken to the child concerned and the person using the measure about the use of the measure (Regulation 17B (3)(h))	28/12/2012
22 (2001)	ensure that any electronic or mechanical devices for the surveillance of children are not used in a children's home except for the purposes of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the child concerned, or other children accommodated in the children's home, and where the following conditions are met (Regulation 22 (a-d))	28/12/2012
33 (2001)	ensure that interviews with consent and in private, such of the children accommodated there, their parents, relatives and persons working at the home as appears necessary are undertaken in order to form an opinion of the standard of care provided by the home (Regulation 33(4)(a))	28/12/2012
34 (2001)	include in the quality assurance system consultation with children accommodated in the home, their parents and placing authorities (Regulation 34 (3))	28/12/2012
28 (2001)	maintain for each child who is accommodated in a children's home a record in permanent form the information, documentation and records specified in Schedule 3 relating to that child; is kept up-to-date and signed and dated by the	28/12/2012

	author of each written entry. (Regulation 28 (1)(a,b,c))	
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Recommendations

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

- enable children to communicate their views on all aspects of their care and support (NMS 1.3)
- ensure sanctions and rewards for behaviour are clear, reasonable and fair and are understood by all staff and children (NMS 3.8)
- make the home a comfortable and homely environment that is well maintained and decorated. Risk reduction should not lead to an institutional feel (NMS 10.2)
- include in the children's guide how a child and parents can contact their IRO, the Children's Rights Director and Ofsted if they wish to raise a concern with inspectors, and how to secure access to an independent advocate (NMS 13.5)
- review the results of all statutory reviews and reviews if Placement Plans are recorded on the child's file, and individuals responsible for pursuing actions at the home arising from reviews are clearly identified (NMS 25.8)
- ensure the child's placement and behaviour strategy plan sets out any specific strategies that have been agreed to reduce the incidences of any negative behaviour exhibited by the child. (2.88. volume 5)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people form positive relationships with staff. As a result of these attachments young people show improvements in their self-confidence and self-management of their challenging behaviours. Young people have successfully overcome phobias such as feeling unable to use public conveniences. This progress has enabled them to go out of the home for longer periods of time and to participate in an increased range of positive activities.

Young people's physical and emotional health needs are assessed and met. Access to services such as the dentist and general practitioner as well as specialist services is successfully gained. This improves the diagnosis and provision of treatment of complex conditions as well as problems such as ear ache that can cause pain and contribute to young people's self-harm and challenging behaviour.

Meal times are social occasions with young people and staff eating together. Young people's dietary requirements are met and young people enjoy their food. A parent reported how their child had had a very limited diet and the home had been very successful in introducing a healthy varied diet.

Young people demonstrate improvements in developing social and communication skills. Individualised systems such as picture exchange system are used to maximise young people's communication skills. However young people's views are not regularly gained about the care that they receive and the progress that they are making this reduces opportunities to empower young people.

Parents report that young people do well at school. Many aspects of educational input are focused on developing social and life skills. Within the home young people's skills such as cooking and taking care of their own personal needs are maximised. This promotes young people's dignity, independence and supports a successful transition to adulthood. However young people's educational goals and objectives are not always identified in care plans and the input from the home towards young people's attainment is poorly recorded and monitored. Young people have good school attendance.

Staff enable good contact to be maintained between young people and their parents. This is undertaken through home visits and regular phone contact. Internet access has been problematic due to technical issues, but these issues have now been overcome. Parents look forward to having more contact via the internet with their children. This promotes young people's sense of attachment and helps them to make progress in other areas of their lives.

Quality of care

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

Staff are caring and provide a consistent approach to the care of young people. Staff show respect and dignity for young people particularly at times when supporting aspects of personal care. Social stories are utilised by staff to prepare young people for a range of transitions, this reduces young people's anxiety and challenging behaviour.

Care and behaviour plans are in place but do not contain sufficient detail about young people's goals and objectives. Staff have good verbal communication between each other on a daily basis and do ensure that consistent care is provided. In addition there are monthly team meetings when the details of young people's needs are discussed. Keyworkers complete adequate six monthly progress reports as contributions to young people's statutory reviews. However there is insufficient recording of young people's progress and this impacts on the ability of the home to know the effectiveness of actions.

Complaints and grumbles are documented and positively responded to. Information regarding advocacy is not promoted in the children's guide but parents do receive information about how to make a complaint in the event that they want to raise a concern.

Staff encourage young people to personalise their bedrooms so that they have their

own private and individualised space. Staff use choice boards to gain young people's views about activities that they want to participate in. Weekend and holiday periods are well planned for on an individualised basis such as going swimming and go-karting with friends. These activities are fun, develop physical well-being and help to develop social skills. Young people have been involved in some developments in the garden and some young people have participated in growing vegetables. This engages young people in purposeful activities, promotes their communication skills and encourages attachment to the home. However there are no regular young people's meetings and young people's input into the home's developments is not documented.

Communication with local school is good and it particularly promotes a consistent approach to behaviour management. Young people's attendance at school is very good enable young people to maximise their educational attainment.

There is very good communication with parents with a minimum of weekly communication. Parents report high regard for the home. They comment on the positive progress that their young people have made since living in the home. However they feel there is a need for the home's environment to be more homely.

Arrangements for dealing with medication are safe.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people have learning difficulties and associated limited verbal communication. Staff are very aware of young people's vulnerabilities and provide good supervision of young people to ensure that they are safe. Staff are vigilant at identifying young people's emotional well-being and respond promptly and sensitively to early signs of distress. Young people are successfully supported to reduce episodes of self-harm and challenging behaviour.

There is no reporting of any bullying behaviour and the close supervision of young people means that staff would quickly be alerted to any intimidating behaviours in the home.

Young people are able to move freely around the home and garden. Risk assessments for activities outside of the home are in place. Young people are provided with good support to enable them to participate in a range of activities and enjoy individualised holidays this promotes a range of positive experiences including strengthening relationships with their keyworkers. There are also generic risk assessments for example for evacuation in the event of fire. However individualised risk assessments are not comprehensive for example they do not address the need for bedroom sensors that are used on some young people's bedrooms. Lack of robust assessments and consent reduces knowledge about how to keep young people safe and impacts on young people's privacy.

There is minimal use of physical restraint. Proactive strategies and use of measures of control and discipline and use of sanctions are not sufficiently detailed and the effectiveness of measures are not consistently reported. Some behaviour strategies identify the sensory room as part of young people's strategy but it does not make clear what part such measures play in promoting positive behaviour.

Staff state that young people are always communicated with after the use of a restraint and that following the use of a restraint staff report that they also expect to have a debrief. However incident forms lack evidence of debriefs always taking place. This hinders opportunities to support young people and staff as well as reducing opportunities to learn from such incidents.

The home has improved recruitment and vetting processes have improved to ensure that only suitable adults are recruited to care for children and young people in the home.

Leadership and management

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

The home has increased the number of young people it is accommodating on a long term basis and has reduced the number of young people have short breaks. It is operating within its conditions of registration. However, the Statement of Purpose as yet has not been up-dated to reflect these changes. The experienced manager is effectively supporting the long standing staff group through this period of change.

The manager is aware of most of the weaknesses identified in this report. Young person's records are not all up-to-date and some information is not signed or dated consequently accountability for reporting on some aspects of the young person's care is not clear.

The home is clean and some areas are nicely decorated. The garden is generally child and young person friendly with some areas having been enhanced. However in some areas of the home there are staff notices and staff bikes are in the accommodation's corridors. While some of the accommodation is personalised and looks cared for this is not the case for all areas of living space. The sensory rooms are not all pleasantly maintained and the reception area is not homely.

The manager has taken actions in response to previous actions and has greatly improved the quality assurance monitoring in the home. In addition the manager has had the first meeting of a parent group the aims of which include gaining their views about the quality of care that their young people receive. However quality assurance monitoring including independent visitor reports do not include input from young people, parents and the placing authority. This limits opportunities to gain important information from relevant people and direct priorities for improvement.

Mandatory training has been put in place to ensure that staff are skilled and knowledgeable to care for young people and to promote their safety. Young people

are not escorted to the 'chill out' room which has been closed and does not impinge on young people's liberty.

Staff supervision is now being undertaken on a regular basis ensuring that staff are well supported to care for young people. Staff ensure that they communicate about young people's needs at the start of every shift. Staff work on an individualised basis with young people so that there is good continuity of care. Staff are also good at using the home's communication book as an aid to communicating changes to young people's care.

The home alerts relevant partners about significant events to ensure that young people's care is safe and appropriate.

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.