

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Debbie Foster
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This is a short break service run by a local authority, providing care and accommodation for young people with learning and physical 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**.

Children and young people enjoy short breaks in a familiar environment that is described by interested parties as warm and welcoming with kind and helpful staff. Relationships between staff and young people are extremely positive and staff know the young people really well. Consequently, they are able to communicate effectively with them and are able to ascertain their views and opinions about the running of the home.

Young people and parents are positive about the care they receive at the home. Staff are committed and sound quality care practices are established and followed. The positive relationships which exist assist young people to gain trust and develop confidence. Care planning and practice is individualised to meet young people's specific needs. Staff can verbalise the progress young people are making. However, young people's needs are not embedded in consistently well written placement plans. Young people's progress is not documented to clearly demonstrate their achievements. As a result, to date the record of care support does not always demonstrate the difference that the home is making towards improved outcomes for young people.

Young people are kept safe and made to feel safe. This remains a strength of the service. Staff show a good knowledge and understanding of the risks young people face and always take positive action to ensure risks are minimised and safely managed.

A new manager has joined the leadership team of the home. There is a core number of staff who have a range of skills and experience among them. Staff say they are

well supported by the management team and they have built on communication and working consistently as a team. The manager has a good understanding of the current strengths and weaknesses of the service. It is evident that they have a strong commitment to providing an improved and safe standard of care, to bring better outcomes for young people.

However, staff continue to not receive regular, formal supervision and deficiencies identified by the home's monitoring systems have not all been acted upon promptly to assist in improving the quality of care provided. The statement of purpose is not up-to-date to ensure accurate information is available to those accessing the service. Although there has been some improvement in young people accessing the community, this is not regular and routine to ensure they expand their life experiences and actively participate in the wider community. The fire risk assessment has not been reviewed in a timely manner, to ensure all measures are in place to sustain young people's safety. On occasions staffing levels are depleted and this affects the quality of care provided to 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
27 (2001)	ensure that all staff receive appropriate training, supervision and appraisal. In particular, that there is formal supervision for all staff including agency staff (Regulation 27 (4)(a))	28/06/2013
5 (2001)	ensure the statement of purpose is kept under review and where appropriate revised. (Regulation 5(a))	28/06/2013

Recommendations

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

- ensure young people can pursue individual social interests and hobbies. This should include taking part in a range of activities. In particular, routinely accessing the community through trips and other leisure activities (NMS 7.2)
- ensure each child's Placement Plan is monitored by a key worker within the home who ensures that the requirements of the plan are implemented in the day-to-day care of that child. In particular, that the targets and goals set are implemented by staff and that the records made reflect the progress each young person is making in this respect (NMS 25.2)

- ensure risk assessments of the whole children's home environment are carried out, to identify any potential sources of harm to the children, are recorded in writing and regularly reviewed. In particular the fire risk assessment (NMS 10.8)
- ensure there are effective procedures for monitoring and controlling the activities of the home. In particular, ensure monitoring systems identify all omissions and deficiencies and lead to the registered provider and manager taking immediate action to improve the quality of care (NMS 21.1)
- ensure the overall number, competence and deployment of staff, both as a staff group and on individual shifts, can fulfil the home's statement of purpose and meet the individual needs of all the children staying at the home. (NMS 17.1)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **adequate**.

Young people are at different stages of developing emotional resilience. They benefit from the very positive relationships forged by staff. This has assisted in building trust and understanding of each young person's individual needs. Young people engage with the staff extremely well, communicating their feelings and wishes. A young person said, 'I like the staff.' Those young people who are fairly new to the service have now settled into their new environment. This has taken varying amounts of time, and staff recognise the impact of the change for young people with learning disabilities and autism. As a result, young people's anxieties have reduced and they are now developing a positive self-view through the individualised care they receive.

Young people live in an environment that promotes their health and emotional well-being overall. They are supported to develop healthy lifestyles. This includes providing young people with healthy and nutritious meals that also meet diverse needs. The staff are aware of individual children's likes, dislikes and special diets to ensure that young people enjoy the food served. Although parents still have the overall responsibility for their child's health needs, staff have an understanding of young people's specific health needs. They have received relevant training to ensure young people's health needs are met.

For most of the young people who attend for short breaks, their education is the responsibility of their parents. The home fully supports young people to attend their education and, consequently, attendance continues to be excellent during their stay. The home has suitable relationships with all the schools young people attend and effective communication ensures there is no disruption to their education.

Staff maintain good contact with parents and carers. This is facilitated by regular telephone contact and the use of daily diaries. This enables an exchange of information which benefits young people as all parties strive to work together. A parent said, 'I have a good relationship with the staff; they speak with me on a regular basis about my daughter's care; and she really enjoys her stay and the home, and looks forward to visiting.'

Young people benefit from a good range of activities in the home which supplement what their own homes can offer. For example, there are opportunities for sensory play, cookery, electronic games, soft play, listening to music, watching films and meeting with their peers. A young person said, 'I like to watch my DVDs when I visit.' There is a garden area, which provides an outside play area, which some young people enjoy using. The home has recently purchased go-kart type bikes which are popular with a number of the young people. There has been some progress in young people accessing the community, including a few trips to the coast. However, this is not regular practice. There is a lack of trained drivers to assist young people to routinely access community activities. Therefore, young people do not have regular experience of their wider community and work on sustained community inclusion continues.

Quality of care

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

Young people have built warm relationships with staff: there is a good rapport between them. Staff speak about their work with the young people with commitment and have a child-centred approach saying, for example, 'It's so important to build good relationships with the young people. It's essential in helping us to engage so much better with them.' Young people said the 'staff are kind' and 'I like the staff'.

Young people's views are genuinely sought and acted upon. They have chosen their preferred bedroom for their stay, made suggestions for the menu and choose the activities they would like to do in the evenings and on weekends. Young people's meetings take place and some young people attend the Children's Rights group. Staff are aware of the procedures to follow in the event of any complaint being made. There have been three complaints made about the service. Action has been taken to address them by the manager.

Verbally, staff demonstrate a good awareness of young people's needs and the progress some of them are making. Most placement plans have been reviewed and updated since the last inspection. Staff have worked hard to achieve this. Placement plans continue to outline young people's individual and diverse needs. In most areas these provide clear guidance for staff on how their care and support should be provided. However, young people's needs are not embedded in consistently well written placement plans. It is not always clear that target and care plan goals have been achieved or if any progress has been made by the young person. This impacts negatively upon the quality of care and support for young people's health, welfare, behaviour, safety and preparation for independence. To date, therefore, the records of care support do not yet demonstrate the difference that the home is making towards improved outcomes for young people.

Staff promote positive behaviour and strive to manage negative behaviour through building positive relationships with the young people. Staff say that 'having clear boundaries and being consistent with each young person is essential; young people know what is expected and this brings improved behaviour'. Staff demonstrate an

understanding of the individual behaviour strategies that are in place for each young person. As a result, young people benefit from improving and more socially acceptable behaviour.

The staff fully recognise and appreciate that individual young people will have needs arising from diversity. Where necessary, support services are involved where required in the health, care and education of the young people. Good policies and practice around the safe storage, handling and administration of medication exist. Where deficiencies and omissions have been identified, appropriate action has been taken to address them. Staff have received training in basic first aid. The majority of staff have received training in epilepsy and gastro-tube feeding to enable them to respond to medical occurrences, where required. This ensures young people's health and welfare is supported appropriately.

Young people live in a well-equipped and maintained property. Local shops and public transport can be easily accessed. The refurbished home provides a modern, comfortable environment for young people, with special adaptations to meet the needs of young people with physical and learning disabilities. A variety of bathing facilities, including a Jacuzzi, assist in meeting the young people's personal needs. Young people have their own bedrooms, which they can personalise to reflect their individuality during their short break stay. This ensures young people benefit from a pleasant home with good facilities.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people are kept safe in the home; safeguarding is a high priority. Young people's safety and welfare is very important and central to all practice. A parent said, 'I know my daughter is kept safe when visiting the home, when staff speak to me I know this is seen as very important.' Staff are very proactive in recognising the particular vulnerabilities and diverse needs of the young people in their care.

All young people's individual needs are risk assessed and areas of vulnerability are identified. The majority of risk assessments are effectively implemented and reviewed to ensure young people are kept safe in a variety of situations. However, the fire risk assessment has not been reviewed after a 12 month period.

Staff get to know children and young people very well over time and are therefore sensitive to their individual gestures and methods of communication, body language, mood and physical presentation. This means that children and young people's concerns and changes in behaviour are clearly understood. Staff follow clear processes for recording incidents and concerns and take action to escalate any emerging welfare matters to the right agencies. Staff attend training in safeguarding and child protection and complete refresher courses to ensure their skills are kept up-to-date. Since the last inspection, there have been no child protection referrals made.

Young people benefit greatly from the promotion of positive behaviour. Staff have a good awareness of possible triggers for individual young people. Physical intervention is used as a last resort and only occurs if a young person is endangering themselves or others. Sanctions are rarely used and are only given if a young person understands their use. Negative behaviour is successfully re-directed and de-escalation techniques are used to reduce the number of incidents. This encourages young people to behave in a positive and socially acceptable way.

Safety is a high priority and specialist equipment, such as hoists, is subject to regular maintenance to ensure it is safe. The home conducts regular checks in relation to gas and electrical appliances to confirm they meet safety requirements. Young people and staff are subject to fire training, practice and drills. This helps to ensure they will be able to safely evacuate the building in the event of a fire. There are no observable hazards which could create a risk to young people. As a result, young people benefit from and enjoy staying in a safe environment.

Leadership and management

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

A Statement of Purpose is available to inform professionals, parents and carers about how care is provided at the home. There is a children's guide and this is available in different formats to meet young people's diverse needs. Young people receive a copy of it before they come to live at the home so that they know what to expect if they go to stay there. However, the information in the Statement of Purpose is not up-to-date. This does not ensure that those wishing to access the service have all the relevant and current information to inform their decision about whether the service is suitable for a young person.

The manager is currently registering with Ofsted and is supporting staff to provide a safe environment with sound care outcomes for young people. The management team have appropriate qualifications, skills and experience. Young people benefit from care delivered by a suitably managed, stable and permanent staff team.

Three out of the four requirements from the previous inspection have been acted upon. A summary of the report reviewing the quality of care has now been sent into Ofsted as required. This demonstrates the service is being monitored by the manager of the service. Young people's placement plans have now been reviewed and revised. This ensures that overall the staff can provide suitable support and each young person's care reflects their current needs. All staff including agency staff have now received fire instruction and taken part in a drill or fire training. Therefore, staff have the knowledge and skill to respond appropriately and safeguard young people in the event of a fire.

One requirement and two recommendations from the last inspection have not been fully implemented. Although the frequency of formal supervision has improved for some staff, it remains sporadic and infrequent for others. Therefore, regular formal supervision does not routinely take place for all staff. This means that not all staff

have specific time to reflect on their practice and consider their development needs. Young people are still not routinely accessing the community through trips and other leisure activities. As a result, young people's experience of and inclusion in their wider community is not regular and sustained. The response to identified omissions and deficiencies found in the homes monitoring systems is still not always prompt to assist in immediately improving the quality of care. This does not ensure effective procedures for monitoring and controlling the activities of the home.

The staff team are well trained, both in general childcare qualifications, mandatory areas and in some disability related conditions. The manager ensures that staff have appropriate on-going development opportunities. This enables staff to be confident in their practice. As a result, they are able to offer an appropriate standard of care.

In the main sufficient staff levels ensure suitable care is provided to children and young people. Staff report they are supported to meet the needs of the children and young people. However, a number of staff vacancies, along with some long term sickness, have started to impact on adequately staffing the home on a few occasions. Although the home has the use of regular agency staff to supplement the shortfall, this does not always ensure the allocated staffing levels are provided on all shifts. Therefore, on occasions this adversely impacts on the quality of care provided to some young people.

Staff said that they receive a lot of informal management support, feel more listened to and morale has improved in recent months. Regular staff meetings are being held to ensure staff are clear on their roles, duties and the changes being made to improve the service provided to young people.

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* and the evaluation schedule for the inspection of children's homes.