

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Valerie Shephard
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to six children and young people with physical and learning disabilities and complex health needs. The home is managed by a private organisation.

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 **outstanding**.

Children and young people achieve exceptional outcomes given their starting points and the range of diverse and complex needs they have. The provision of specialist health care ensures children and young people are able to live in the home rather than a hospital setting. Some young people have exceeded expectations of medical professionals in terms of their outcomes. For example, hospital stays for some children and young people have reduced considerably since admission to the home. This is due to the provision of very high levels of personal care. One social worker said, 'the home has a very skilled and competent staff team who don't panic and manage highly complex individual care needs extremely well.'

Children and young people are central to the running of the home and they thrive. While the home is extremely busy, it is highly organised, very nurturing and the atmosphere is calm and cheerful. Children and young people are wholly dependent on staff to meet their extensive needs. As a result, relationships between them and staff are strong and supportive. One parent said, 'our son is truly loved by the staff, and the home feels like a second family.'

The home has high aspirations for all children and young people who use the service. Staff constantly look at ways to improve the outcomes for children and young people. For example, engaging children and young people in acquiring self-care skills, such as holding a toothbrush or washing their own face. Staff are confident in communicating with children and young people to ensure continual improvements are made in the delivery of their care. A health professional commented, 'the home has not only provided exemplary support for their health care needs, but have also

maximised their educational opportunities and life experiences.'

No breaches of regulations are identified in this inspection. Three recommendations are made in relation to staff appraisals, accessible worktop in kitchen and replacement of some carpets. None of these have a significant impact on the welfare or outcomes of children and young people.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure home continues to provide a comfortable and homely environment with particular reference to replacement of stained carpets (10.3)
- ensure young people are given the necessary support to develop practical skills in relation to basic preparation of food by provision of adjustable work surface in kitchen (NMS 12.1.e)
- ensure all staff have their performance individually and formally appraised at least annually and this appraisal takes into account any views of children and young people the service is providing for. (NMS 19.6).

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **outstanding**.

Children and young people achieve exceptionally good outcomes during their time in the home. Children and young people are happy demonstrated by their body language, eye contact and facial expressions which reflect their sense of well-being. Staff members say they are seeing significant improvements in children's and young people's eye contact and listening skills. One member of staff said that a child who came from hospital, 'initially did not want to be touched, but now loves attention and affection.' A social worker said about a young person, 'he has really come out of himself during his time in the home. He smiles more, is very cheerful and more confident.'

Where possible, children and young people are able to attend their education with a full range of support services as necessary. A flexible approach enables staff to accompany some children into school and remain with them to ensure continuity of care. Children of pre-school age have access to appropriate provision prior to them commencing nursery education. Children and young people benefit from considerable support with homework and where appropriate, preparation for further education.

Children and young people benefit from access to stimulating activities in the community. Examples of these include trips out to the park, zoo, and cinema, bowling or visiting a local restaurant. Children and young people enjoy shopping and

exercising their choice over purchases such as clothing, toiletries and toys. Children and young people have the opportunity to participate in a holiday which provides a change of scenery and different activities.

Children and young people enjoy regular contact with their families which serve to sustain attachments and support their identity. Parents are encouraged to visit the home. One parent said, 'I am always made to feel welcome in the home, I can pop in or ring at any time.' Staff extend their skills and support into the community. They equip parents with specialist care skills to enable their child to spend brief periods of time in the family home.

As young people mature they gain independence in accordance with their abilities. Examples include learning about managing money, taking responsibility for medication in accordance with appropriate risk assessments, organising haircuts and shopping for clothes. Some difficulties have arisen in relation to appropriate independence for young adults over the age of 18 years. However, this is not due to tardy practices on behalf of the home. Indeed evidence suggests the home is proactive in working in partnership to achieve positive outcomes for young adults. There is a commitment by staff for these young adults to remain in the home until alternative provision is available. During this period, the home strives to meet the needs of the young adult alongside those of the younger residents.

Quality of care

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

Children and young people benefit from extremely high quality care provided by a well-trained and committed staff team. Due to their exceptionally diverse and high care needs, children and young people are utterly dependent on the staff. As a result children and young people develop exceedingly good and trusting relationships with staff. These positive relationships have a beneficial effect on their emotional and psychological well-being. A member of staff said of one child, 'he was sad and poorly when he came, but there is now better engagement and he is gaining trust in us.' One parent said 'our son is thriving; I would definitely recommend this home to others, we feel so lucky to have this placement for him.'

The majority of children and young people are not able to speak and use a range of communication methods, including facial expressions. Staff are exceptionally animated when they talk to children and young people and explain what they are doing at each stage. This helps to prepare them for, and allay fears they may have, about an imminent intervention. Staff are extremely inquisitive and seek ways to try and understand what children and young people want. They have developed innovative ways of communicating with them and enabling them to express their wishes and needs. As a result there is effective consultation as children and young people in the main are able to indicate their wishes.

Staff fully support young people's education through effective links with school and nursery provision. The provision of a home tutor has assisted some young people

with preparation for their exams. For children and young people who receive a short break or shared care service, there are exceedingly good relationships with parents and school. This ensures fruitful communication and an effective handover before and after their stay. A parent said, 'we have control over education but work in partnership with the home.' A social worker said about a young person in receipt of short break provision, 'staff participate fully in school meetings. They are very competent and well trained and clearly know what they are doing.'

Staff ensure that children and young people have access to activities they enjoy such as swimming, watching football or the cinema. They are creative in introducing a wide range of stimulating experiences which enhance children's and young people's living experiences. An example of this is the provision of 'messy fruit play'. This ensures that children and young people experience new tactile sensations through smell, taste and touch which enhance their living experience.

Most of the children and young people in the home are able to engage in practical independence training. However, a shortfall exists in that there is no accessible working area in the kitchen for young people in a wheelchair. Such provision would maximise opportunities for some young people who may have the potential to acquire basic skills. Staff fully support young people who are in transition and there are proactive relationships with housing providers and leaving care services. Staff are persistent in ensuring that progress is made in achieving transition plans for young people and young adults. One survey response commented, 'I would recommend this children's home to other social workers or independent reviewing officers.'

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Children and young people are safe in this home. Due to their complex and diverse needs they are especially vulnerable and benefit from highly trained staff who provide exceptionally safe care. Training for staff ensures that they fully understand safeguarding policies and procedures and are able to implement these confidently and effectively. There are no referrals in relation to child protection concerns. Dispensation of medication is carefully and robustly managed which offers protection to children and young people. Protected time for the lead dispenser to administer medication ensures accuracy and the completion of log sheets to a high standard.

The home utilises comprehensive individual risk management plans for all children and young people and these are subject to regular review. Almost all of the children and young people in the home have high levels of risk associated with their complex health needs. Consequently extra vigilance is required to ensure children and young people remain safe while maximising their opportunities for growth and development.

High staffing levels ensure one to one supervision of children and young people. As a result there are minimal risks associated with the wide age range of children, young

people and young adults resident. There are no bullying or missing from home events and very few incidents of children or young people presenting with difficult behaviour. Staff are trained in the use of restraint, however they rarely need to use this technique in the home.

Robust recruitment and vetting of new staff ensures that children and young people are protected from adults who could cause them harm. Exceptionally close monitoring of visitors to the home is necessary given the extreme vulnerabilities of the residents.

Routine testing of all the home's appliances, such as electrical and gas equipment, creates a safe environment for children and young people. There are clear evacuation plans and regular drills take place in relation to fire or other hazards. This is to ensure swift removal of children and young people from the building in the event of an emergency.

Leadership and management

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

The home benefits from a committed management team who strive to ensure that children and young people fulfil their potential wherever possible. The home has recently appointed a new manager who is in the process of submitting her application for registration with Ofsted. The manager is very experienced and suitably qualified and was previously the deputy within the home. She is dedicated to meeting the individual needs of the children and young people and is fully familiar with the home's operation. As a result she is able to provide continuity of leadership for the children, young people and staff. The only shortcoming is that she is untried and tested as a manager. However, she regularly deputised for the previous manager and is confident in her abilities to sustain excellent practice in the home.

Management highly value staff training and it is given priority in the home. The staff team are well qualified with a large majority possessing a recognised diploma in child care. New staff are subject to a thorough induction period and are promptly enrolled onto the Children's Workforce Diploma Course in line with standards. In addition staff receive substantial training in specialist medical intervention procedures, necessary to carry out complex health care with confidence. These measures ensure staff are extremely effective in providing excellent care to children and young people with complex or life threatening health conditions.

High staffing ratios ensure that children and young people are cared for on a one to one basis. Staff are clear at the beginning of each shift which child or young person they are assigned and are fully responsible for. This provides continuity of care and reassurance for children and young people who are wholly reliant on staff to meet their needs. This process provides security and helps children and young people to develop emotional resilience.

Staff benefit from exceptionally good supervision and support to ensure they meet

the high care needs of children and young people. However, a shortfall exists in relation to the lack of annual staff appraisals. Supervision records indicate that individual training needs are discussed; however opportunities to reflect and plan for the future are not currently met.

Robust monitoring systems are in place to ensure continuity of high standards of care for children and young people. Regular consultation with them, their parents and professionals ensures that relevant views are taken into account in care delivery. The Statement of Purpose is currently under review to include the newly appointed staff, including the manager. The home's development plan is subject to on-going review in an endeavour to sustain improvement.

The physical standards within the home are generally excellent with prompt attention paid to maintenance of equipment and the building. This results in the creation of a homely rather than an institutional environment. The lounge and dining area is the central hub of the home. This provides ample space for children and young people to eat, play and socialise with each other, and family and friends. There is a shortcoming in relation to some of the carpets in the home which need replacing to maintain the high standards.

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.