

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Russell Shackford
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This service provides residential short-breaks care for up to 11 young people with learning and physical disabilities. It also offers a service to some young adults aged up to 19 years. The home is run by a local authority.

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**.

Young people make exceptional progress in relation to their starting points across all aspects of their welfare and development - physical, social, emotional and behavioural. This is underpinned by effective, high-quality support from staff. Care planning and practice are highly personalised to meet the individual needs of each young person. Relationships between young people and staff are excellent. Staff demonstrate a good understanding of safe working practice.

There are minor shortfalls in fire safety refresher training and quality assurance monitoring. These shortfalls have a potential rather than a directly negative impact on young people's welfare and safety.

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
32 (2001)	make arrangements for persons working at the home to receive suitable training in fire prevention (Regulation 32 (1) (d))	09/10/2013

Recommendations

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

- establish a system to report upon the previous six months monitoring of the matters listed in Schedule 6 in order to enable the provider to identify any trends and issues of concern so that they can continually improve the quality of care at the home. A copy of every report should be sent to HMCI within twenty eight days of completion. (Volume 5, statutory guidance, paragraph 3.14)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **outstanding**.

The outcomes achieved by young people are exceptional and the impact that the home has had in supporting this progress and achieving these outcomes is clearly evidenced. For example, improvements for individual children in the areas of communication, posture, sleep patterns excellent improvements in the area of developing independence in relation to toileting. For some children notable improvements in their social skills, such as eye contact and eating at the table with others. Young people have access to a wide range of experiences and opportunities. Several staff highlighted the fact that they strive to ensure that young people's outcomes are not limited by reasonable risks or difficulties in achieving them. As a result, young people access music festivals, farms, canal boats, cycling holidays and adventure holidays.

Young people benefit from equality of opportunity and as a result, they develop a wide range of skills as part of their growth and development. Regular visits to local art galleries, youth clubs, parks and recreational facilities ensure that all young people are able to develop a broad range of community-based interests. Community gardening, charity fund raising and volunteer work at a local sweetshop-venture are further examples.

Young people feel settled and have familiarity with, and predictability in, their daily routines. A notable area of strength is the excellent relationships between the staff, parents and carers. Consistency of care and routines ensures that the transition between staying at home and the service is particularly well managed.

Some young people are developing independence skills. For example, older young people are supported in independently accessing public transport and in planning and preparing their own snacks. The staff's efforts are supported by an adventure skills service where young people can socialise, practice independence skills and build adventure skills.

Quality of care

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

Relationships between young people and staff are excellent and young people enjoy spending time at the service. One member of staff said, 'One of the best things about the service is that young people love coming here. We are always looking for new things to do with them.' A committed team of highly skilled, well trained and caring staff are dedicated to meeting young people's complex needs. Staff spend time with young people in groups and individually. One staff said, 'We are so pleased to see each other. The most important thing that we can do is to make sure that young people have a brilliant time here.'

The young person's guide is written in an accessible format. As a result, some young people are able to understand the contents and know how to complain. The introduction of 'feelings boards' supported by use of photographs and symbols further enhances young people's ability to access the complaints procedures. An independent advocacy services helps to ensure that all young people's wishes and feelings are considered.

Young people are encouraged to participate in youth forums and their views are actively sought in regular consultation meetings at the home. This results in an open, inclusive atmosphere where young people feel that their views are respected and acted upon. Therefore, young people, irrespective of their disability, are able to communicate their wishes, views and feelings.

Consistently well written, detailed short break care planning ensures that the individual needs and vulnerabilities of young people are identified and met. Staff employ innovative means of supporting young people to contribute to reviews of their care and support; staff diligently seek to ensure that young people are at the heart of the service.

Peer relationships and social groups are actively promoted. As a result, young people enjoy spending time with peers who have similar interests and they have enjoyable stays. The staff support young people to engage in a variety of enjoyable activities, for example, swimming, bowling, football, artwork, music and shopping. This also helps young people to keep fit and healthy.

Young people's health needs are extremely well met by the staff team. This is further enhanced by all staff having regular access to a dedicated health professional who provides training, advice and support on a range of matters. Young people are encouraged to eat healthily. Food served to young people is healthy, balanced, nutritious and reflective of their dietary and cultural needs. Good policies and practice around the storage, handling, administration and disposal of medication safeguards young people's welfare.

The home is appropriately located near to shops, leisure, education and employment opportunities. It is on a main bus route to the nearby city centre. The home's

location and transport links support young people's ability to develop independence skills that will equip them for adulthood, for example travelling on a bus or using local shops. The home has a lively, vibrant feel and this is emphasised by the variety of colours, young people's photographs and artwork on display. All areas of the home are maintained in a good state of structural and decorative repair. The outdoor play areas and garden are accessible, well maintained and safe.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

This home is good at keeping young people safe. Consistently well-written risk assessments inform staff of the action to take to minimise any identified risks and this is implemented in practice. The manager and staff have received child protection training which includes specific elements of safeguarding young people with a learning disability. Staff demonstrate good knowledge and understanding of the organisation's safeguarding procedures; because of this they are able to promote and protect young people's safety.

There is good written guidance for staff to follow in the event of unauthorised absence and young people going missing. This is supported by individualised risk assessment records. On the extremely rare occasion that young people are missing, quick and effective action is taken to secure their safe return.

Regular fire safety checks and maintenance arrangements contribute to a safe environment. Staff and young people have been involved in fire drills to help ensure that they know what to do in the event of a fire at the home. However, due to a recent training event being cancelled because of the trainer's illness, a small number of staff have not received fire safety refresher training to help them minimise any risks posed to people at the home. This has the potential to compromise safety in the event of a fire. However, the training is re-booked for the very near future.

All staff are appropriately recruited. Their suitability to work with young people is assessed by the recruitment checks completed, including the completion of a satisfactory criminal record check.

Leadership and management

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

A Statement of Purpose is available which informs professionals and members of the public about how care is provided at the home. The children's guide provides an accessible summary of the Statement of Purpose and this is appropriate to the age and understanding of the young people.

An established staff team provide consistent care to young people. Newly recruited assistant managers have had a positive impact, with several staff highlighting the benefits of 'added hands' on support and confidence-building within the team. Social

workers describe the staff as, 'A confident, knowledgeable and dedicated team who provide consistently good care.' Staff receive satisfactory induction training before commencing work with the young people. This familiarises them with the home's written guidance which is implemented in practice. All staff have completed an appropriate course at level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People as well as completing training in other childcare-related topics. As a result, young people are looked after by staff that are well trained, competent and supported to meet their needs.

External management monitoring of the service provided is good with comprehensive reports being produced. Reporting demonstrates this area of monitoring consults with parents, social workers. Also, raises issues for further improvement to which the service responds by developing action plans. The managers working in the home provide good support and the supervision of staff was highlighted as, 'One of the best things about the home,' by several staff members. The manager monitors and reports on the quality of care and outcomes for children. However, the home's management monitoring records are sometimes brief in detail and do not fully evaluate practice. These shortfalls have not had a detrimental effect upon the quality of care or outcomes for young people but do impact on the home's ability to demonstrate how it intends to improve practice and create a robust service development plan. A summary report on the quality of care during the previous six months has not been completed or supplied to Ofsted as required. The regulator is therefore unable to monitor the conduct and development of the service in the interim period between inspections.

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.