

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Wendy Anderson
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This children's home is registered to care for five children with learning difficulties and associated disabilities. The home is run by a private company and can offer the flexibility of short breaks in addition to long-term placements.

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**.

Young people make exceptional progress in all aspects of their care. The staff team are dynamic, committed and enthusiastic about their work; which has the young people's well-being, safety and development at its heart.

Staff are proactive at consulting with young people, parents and fellow professionals on the care they deliver. This consistency of care benefits all young people and leads to improved outcomes.

Young people, parents and fellow professionals are extremely positive about the highly individualised care that young people receive; particularly in relation to addressing their often very complex health care needs.

Relationships between the staff and the young people are exceptional; and based on mutual trust and respect. Young people and their parents have great confidence in the abilities and competence of the staff team.

The nurturing and stimulating environment provides young people with a sense of security. Because of this, young people make exceptional progress in all aspects of their development.

The ethos of the home maximises the progress young people make by introducing them to new social experiences within the home and the wider community. Staff consistently and very effectively work with young people, parents and fellow professionals, such as social workers and health professionals, to achieve this.

Leaders and managers of the home have robust monitoring systems which ensure young people receive a high standard of care and that required documentation is completed. The only shortfalls concern the supporting documentation in relation to the recent re-instatement of the use of CCTV cameras for one young person and ensuring all risk assessments are signed off by managers.

There have been no breaches of regulations identified.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- Ensure where specific measures, including electronic devices, are used to monitor children's, there is a written policy that sets out how they should be used, how they promote the welfare of the children, how children will be informed of their use, how legitimate privacy of children will be protected and how children will be protected from potential abuse of such methods. In particular where these are to be reinstated this is also recorded in the child's individual protocol for the use of such devices (NMS 10.5)
- ensure risk assessments of the whole children's home environment are carried out, to identify any potential source of harm to the children are recorded in writing and regularly reviewed. In particular all risk assessment should be signed off by the manager. (NMS 10.8)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **outstanding**.

Young people benefit from a thorough assessment and introduction to the home which enables them to settle quickly. This is enhanced by the staff team having a comprehensive understanding of the individual young person's needs prior to their arrival. This well managed process also helps to alleviate any concerns parents may have about a new placement.

Young people, parents and social workers reported that young people love coming to the home. They have made new friends and developed new skills, including gaining more independence regarding their personal care.

Young people are supported by staff to maintain a healthy lifestyle. This includes working with physiotherapists to ensure that young people who have mobility issues undertake the necessary exercise. Parents reported that some of the young people now have a better sleep pattern thanks to the work undertaken at the home.

Young people develop and extend their social skills and networks at the home. They develop patience and learn skills about how to live alongside others. The provision of an extensive range of stimulating activities also enhances this aspect of the young people's development.

Staff effectively involve young people in decisions about their care by using a variety of communication aids.

Education is well supported and promoted by the staff team. Young people have excellent attendance at school and make very good progress. The use of the 'home to school books' promotes effective communication; sharing of information and consistency of approach.

Parents were extremely positive about the care provided. Some said, this is by far the best placement their child has ever had. Others commented on the commitment of the staff, not only to the young people but to them as parents.

One parent said 'they excel at treating the young people as individuals. It's not just a case of the staff being trained on epilepsy; they do young person specific training. This is very reassuring for parents.'

Other parents said the staff are great at communication, 'it's an excellent place'. Another said they 'have absolute trust and confidence in the staff'.

Quality of care

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

The staff team has very high aspirations for the young people it cares for. Parents commented that their children do far more now in all aspects of their lives than prior to admission. Staff see the young people as individuals ahead of their disability. Staff challenge very effectively any barriers that prevent young people's full involvement in society. The whole team has a 'can do' attitude.

The well-being of the young people is at the core of all work undertaken at the home. This begins with the excellent pre-admission assessment process which comprehensively evaluates how each young person's needs are to be met alongside the needs of the existing group of young people. Managers are clear that they must be robust in this to ensure they provide the highest standard of care; including an honest appraisal of whether or not the team is able to meet a young person's identified needs. The robustness of this process ensures that young people consistently receive an excellent standard of care from a staff team that has exceptional knowledge of the young people they care for.

Staff have outstanding relationships with both the young people and their parents or carers. They consult with young people about all aspects of their care using a variety of communication systems.

Consultation with parents is a central aspect in developing the service. Parents reported that staff are very good at informing them about what their child has done; how they have been during their stay at the home and also at consulting them about any new developments or initiatives to help the young person. Parents said that the staff team 'go above and beyond' in the support they give to them, including supporting a young person at their own home as they were too ill to come in for their respite. This view was supported by professionals associated with the home.

Each young person has a highly individualised care plan that is frequently reviewed and updated. These plans are detailed; sensitively written and take into account the young people's preferences with regard to their personal care. Young people are treated with dignity and respect due to the consistent implementation of these plans in practice. Through the robust review and evaluation of these plans it is possible to see the progress that young people make. This is particularly evident in the behaviour plans.

The home has excellent systems in place to address the health and medical needs of young people. Some young people have very complex health care needs. This can be an area of concern for some parents newly accessing the home. However, parents said these concerns were very quickly laid to rest by the staff team and that they have the upmost confidence in them. This is partially attributed to the multi-disciplinary approach taken when formulating health plans, such as, involving medical professionals, specialist nurses and parents.

Where young people have specific medical conditions, health plans address these and staff receive specific training, such as how to manage a seizure and feeding.

The home keeps comprehensive records of medication received into the home; administered to the young people; returned home or disposed of. This provides a clear audit trail through which the medication administered to young people can be monitored. Staff have received training in administering some specific medication for those young people with complex needs. However, there is also some emergency medication that staff have not yet been trained to administer; contingency arrangements have been identified should this be necessary. This system ensures that the young person's health is not placed at risk.

The home is very proactive at ensure that specialist equipment is well maintained and that staff are trained in the use of these with regular updates. The home is also proactive at looking and purchasing any new equipment that will benefit the young people.

Young people are able to access a range of activities both within the home and the local community. During the inspection they were planning their summer holiday to an outdoor pursuit centre which they were all very excited about. Parents said that their children take part in activities that they would not have thought possible or even tried.

Accommodation at the home is of a very high standard. The home has a welcoming

and friendly atmosphere. There is ample space both internally and externally for the young people, including those with wheelchairs or mobility issues. The home has a sensory room which is being refurbished with the aim of providing more stimulating aspects for the young people. There are also lots of interactive opportunities around the home. For example, there is a large face on the wall where young people can change the expressions. Also instead of just displaying menu for the week, there is an open cook book on the wall which gives this information.

The garden has a sensory element which the staff are further developing. Young people benefit from having access to a Jacuzzi which they really enjoy. All of the bedrooms are personalised and comfortably furnished. The home does have CCTV on the external access points. There is also internal CCTV in the bedrooms which are only used where there are health or behaviour concerns noted in young people's care/placement plans. The use of these cameras is assessed and signed off by parents, social workers and the managers of the home. In one young person's file it said that these were no longer being used but they had been reinstated due to concerns about the young person harming themselves. This was decided by the home social workers and parents but this has not been clearly recorded in the young person's file.

The home has a clear complaints policy and procedure in place. There have been no complaints since the last inspection.

The home has extremely positive relationships with the professionals they work with. Fellow professionals compliment the staff team on their commitment to the young people, their communication skills and their drive in continually developing their service to maintain the highest standard of care.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people benefit from living in a stable and safe environment. A robust recruitment and vetting policy and procedure for appointing staff is adhered to in practice. This ensures young people are protected from unsuitable people who may wish to harm them.

The home also has a robust safeguarding policy and procedure, including whistle-blowing; that is adhered to in practice. Staff see safeguarding as an essential part of their work due to the vulnerability of the young people they care for. This approach is supported by robust training for the staff in all areas of child protection and safer care practices.

Staff demonstrate a clear understanding of this area of their work. There have been no safeguarding referrals since the last inspection. The home's whistle-blowing policy contains a specific statement referring to raising issues about family members who work at the home. The managers felt this was needed to give staff clear guidance

should a situation arise.

Behaviour at the home is managed very well. Since the last inspection there have been no physical restraints. The home's focus on positive reinforcement and rewarding good behaviours successfully encourages young people to behave well. Parents and social workers commented in the improvements in the young people's behaviours since they have been placed at the home. Liaison with schools and with other placements promotes a consistent approach to issues. Where sanctions are given, these are low level and well recorded. The evaluation of the effectiveness of the sanction informs future practice.

The home has a robust health and safety policy which is adhered to in practice. This ensures young people live in a safe environment that is free from risk wherever possible. There is a comprehensive risk assessment process which involves details risk assessments which are regularly reviewed and updated in light of any changes. There were some minor gaps in the managers signing these off.

Fire records within the home are comprehensive. This provides evidence that there are regular fire drills and checks on all fire fighting equipment. Fire information signs around the home are in different communication formats to assist the young people's understanding. The home's fire procedure has recently been updated due to a young person refusing to leave the building when the fire alarm was sounded. This now includes a protocol clearly stating what staff are to do in the event this should happen again.

Leadership and management

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

The home's leaders and managers consistently and effectively communicate their high expectations to the staff team and recognise the need to continually develop and improve. The home's managers have clear plans and a vision for the future direction of the home.

The managers invest in a staff team that is well-trained; child-focused staff team and committed to the young people, their parents and the home. The staff team are very passionate, enthusiastic and dynamic in their work. They are driven to provide the best possible care and are all very proud of the home.

At the last inspection there were no recommendations or requirements made. However this has not prevented the home for its continued evaluation and improvement of the work it carries out.

The home has a very stable and well trained staff team who are extremely competent in their roles. This is because of the effective implementation of the home's training strategy which meets the needs of both new and long-term staff.

Multi-disciplinary working is a real strength and staff communicate effectively with

each other and with parents and fellow professionals. One parent said, 'I cannot think of a better group of people to care for my child they are fantastic, amazing people. Nothing is too much trouble.'

Staff reported that they receive excellent levels of informal and formal support. This is supported by clear, comprehensive supervision and appraisal records. Staff said that the homes manager and registered provider are highly visible, very approachable and always available when you need them. Staff were also complimentary about their colleagues in the team saying, 'it is a great team to work with'.

There are robust monitoring systems in place which cover all the work the home undertakes. These systems enable the manager to evaluate the home's work and practice of the staff team. Thus any issues are quickly identified and then addressed.

The home maintains all the required records. These are securely stored and maintained to a high standard.

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.