

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Keith Riley
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home can accommodate up to 26 Young people in 4 separate houses based on the same site. The home caters for Young people with a variety of disabilities, primarily epilepsy and learning difficulties. The home is operated by a registered charity.

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**.

Staff have extremely high aspirations for all young people in their care and outcomes for young people using the service are excellent. Staff have effective relationships with parents, carers, and other professionals to ensure highly individualised care. This consistent approach informs placement and care planning to ensure a holistic approach to care, support and education. Parents say the service exceeds their expectations, describing the service as the best that their child has ever accessed.

Young people have very positive relationships with staff who support them to be as independent as possible. They enjoy positive and constructive relationships with each other, sometimes developing friendships for the first time ever.

Safeguarding young people with complex needs is a strength of the organisation. Young people are able to engage in everyday activities and the wider community safely. They have a strong sense of safety and well-being. There is an outstanding approach to meeting the health needs of young people, especially epilepsy. Qualified professionals such as paediatric neurologists, psychologists and physiotherapists, who are employed by the organisation on the same site, are readily available to staff. Other professionals and parents seek the advice, guidance and support of the qualified professionals employed. This home is part of an organisation who are specialists in their field.

The manager and senior team are aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the service and are continually striving to improve to ensure consistently positive

outcomes for young people. For example, the minor shortfalls identified at inspection, to improve some record keeping and review the staff numbers at particular times, had already been identified by the senior management team.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- monitor the quality and adequacy of record keeping and take action when needed (NMS 22.1)
- consider the overall number and deployment of staff on individual shifts. (NMS 17.1)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **outstanding**.

Outcomes for young people are outstanding. Young people receive excellent levels of care and make considerable progress as a result, notably given their starting points. Highly individualised support helps young people, for example young people with social integration difficulties, to develop their social skills. Their life experiences and confidence are enriched in a caring and nurturing environment at a pace commensurate with their cognitive ability. They receive carefully and sensitively delivered support. Young people gain confidence in their abilities and their anxiety is minimised.

A holistic approach ensures young people have all their needs considered including epilepsy. For example, young people who have struggled historically with their social skills are able to form friendships. One parent said their child now has a social life in a specialist environment that moves at their pace. Other parents say that independence hugely improves as a result of living in this home.

Young people benefit greatly from having their health needs promoted to an exceptionally high standard. Staff obtain specialist support swiftly when needed through the organisation's own health professionals who are immediately available on site. This means that immediate and effective strategies are agreed to support young people with complex health needs or who present with challenging behaviour. Parents say the on-site medical and therapy services are invaluable.

Education is seen as a priority in the home and young people have excellent support at the organisation's school. Attendance is excellent. Achievement is exceptional taking into account the starting point of young people at the time of placement. Education and support staff work closely together. This creates an ethos and culture in the home to ensure learning extends beyond the school day.

Staff provide an individualised and structured home environment. Meal times are an ordered and joyful social occasion with staff supporting young people with their social interaction and developing their independent living skills. Young people show improvements in important areas of their lives, such as learning how to interact with others appropriately or how to use a knife and fork. Professionals say, 'Progression happened quicker than anticipated.'

The views and opinions of young people are continually considered and acted upon. The culture of the home is extremely child-centred, with individual and group living needs being central to practice. Innovative and imaginative systems using technology, as well as more established processes, means that young people have a clear and strong voice in the home. Young people who have severe communication difficulties are supported to successfully develop their communication skills to communicate their needs effectively, for example, their choice of food or activity.

Young people have substantial contact with their parents and staff are accessible to discuss the current and future needs of the young people.

Quality of care

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

Young people benefit from outstanding positive relationships with staff who are focused on individual needs. Their views and opinions are valued and encouraged regarding their experience at the home. Staff use individual, personalised communication methods, both traditional methods and modern methods using digital technology, to seek the wishes and feelings of the young people they care for. Staff demonstrate an intimate knowledge of how some young people may communicate through their behaviour.

Parents describe the service as a 'brilliant place'. They say the staff are very professional while keeping a homely environment for the young people, everyone is treated as an individual and their child enjoys excellent relationships with all the staff.

Young people receive excellent health care and have their emotional and psychological well-being promoted to a particularly high standard. Comprehensive, individual care plans identify in detail how each young person should be supported and what strategies need to be in place in order to help them grow and progress. Each young person's identity is valued and any specific needs, whether related to learning difficulties, health conditions or cultural needs, are known and met to an extraordinarily high standard.

Young people have their needs assessed effectively. Their needs are very well understood by staff who respond to any signs of discomfort and anxiety promptly which ensures that their health, safety and welfare is promoted. There is rapid access to the organisation's own medical centre with qualified professionals in

various specialisms available to meet the immediate needs of each young person. This includes a nurse who is available at all times including after hours. Clear systems are in place to administer medication and audits are regularly undertaken. This demonstrates that the systems for reviewing the medication practice are robust.

Education is another strength of the home. Care staff and education staff work closely and collaboratively to ensure that young people make progress with their education. Individual plans identify specific goals and young people make excellent progress, for example in developing their verbal communication skills.

Inclusion is embedded within the culture of the home. Staff are proactive to ensure young people have access to any activity they desire, for example through the provision of specialist equipment. Young people are encouraged to engage in healthy lifestyles with regular excursions taking place, for example to local parks or horse-riding.

Young people live in a home that provides an outstanding standard of accommodation and facilities. There is a commitment to providing a pleasant living environment which is as homely as possible. The décor is of a high quality throughout with the environment being spacious, comfortable and homely. Young people are enabled to personalise their rooms and have specific areas or other rooms within the home specifically modified for their particular needs and interests. There are clear plans to continually review the environment to ensure it meets the current needs of young people placed in the home.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people's safety and well-being is at the heart of all practice in the home. The culture embedded in the home ensures that the young people benefit from a robust and rigorous approach to safeguarding. Effective management and adherence to robust policies ensure all are protected and supported.

The extreme vulnerabilities of the young people are understood by all members of staff and this ensures that their approach to ensuring their safety is conscientious and rigorous. Detailed records are maintained if there are any incidents which occur. These records include how the situation has been resolved and how the young people's safety has been ensured. Staff recognise that young people's disabilities can make them extremely vulnerable if left unsupervised. Very good staffing levels provide close supervision, which enables young people to feel safe and secure. Risk assessments comprehensively identify different areas of risk. These are regularly reviewed and updated where appropriate to ensure they continue to promote the well-being of young people. This ensures that all risks are managed and that the young people are assisted to take part in activities with acceptable levels of risk.

There are individual behaviour management plans in place for each child. Staff are

fully trained in the home's approved behaviour management techniques and apply these strategies when only really necessary. Non-verbal clues from young people indicating how they are feeling are readily picked up by staff and acted upon. In this way young people are able to develop self-management skills and their anxieties are kept low. Staff are very conscientious in their recording of incidents. This approach is thorough and ensures that practice is open and constantly reviewed. Parents say that there is a significant improvement in the behaviour of their child.

Staff have a thorough understanding of safeguarding procedures in order that they can appropriately respond to any signs or allegations of abuse. For example, staff are vigilant at completing body maps for any marks they observe on young people. They seek appropriate support and advice to conclude young people are not at risk of harm. The manager ensures that all the relevant agencies are informed of any safeguarding issues. This ensures that strategies and plans can be developed in the event of any concerns being identified. Young people are safe in this home.

The Young people's learning disabilities may mean that they do not understand the concept of sanctions and so these are very rarely imposed unless deemed appropriate in their individual plans.

Young people may struggle to understand what bullying is, so the staff ensure that behaviour which may cause distress is carefully managed and that all the young people are protected. Clear and careful planning ensures that young people that spend time together have a safe and happy experience.

Young people's physical safety is protected by excellent robust risk assessments with regards to the premises, fire and activities. The approach to risk management means that young people are able to take part in activities and outings with the support they need. Young people are supported in taking part in regular fire drills, and fire equipment is checked on a routine basis.

The organisation's recruitment policy is thorough and ensures young people are protected from harm by robust personnel checks for staff.

Leadership and management

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

The home is managed by a consistent and effective management team providing excellent leadership. Placing social workers comment most positively on the overall running of the home and the significant progress made by the young people. The diverse needs of all young people placed in the home are central to practice, planning and development, with all decisions focusing on their best interests. The Registered Manager is vastly experienced and clearly understands the needs of young people with disabilities and the support and guidance that staff require to meet these. Appropriately high expectations of standards of practice ensure the culture of the home is vibrant, energetic and child-centred.

Clear information is readily available, explaining what services the home offers and the standards of care which can be expected. The overall number and deployment of staff ensures the home meets its aims as described in the Statement of Purpose. Comments from placing social workers confirm that the services provided by the home are clearly known and meet their expectations. However, the staffing arrangements on some occasions, such as meal-times, are not fully considered.

A comprehensive training programme ensures all staff receive excellent training and development opportunities. Courses provide general and specialist training, with staff able to make requests to aid their own personal development needs.

The management team effectively runs the service and are always seeking to improve. The managers are aware of where improvements can be made and works to implement changes as necessary, for example a review of communication between senior managers and support staff. There is robust monitoring by the independent visitor who will, for example, conduct the visit outside normal working hours to get a balanced and realistic view of the quality of care.

The vast majority of young people's records are accurate and up to date. However, in a minority of cases, records do not clearly show how decisions are made, for example advice given by other professionals verbally is not always recorded in writing. This has no current impact on the young people.

The management ensure that notifications are sent to all the relevant parties.

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.