

## Inspection report for children's home

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<b>Unique reference number</b>	SC055912
<b>Inspection date</b>	30/07/2013
<b>Inspector</b>	Pete Hylton
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Full
<b>Provision subtype</b>	Children's home

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<b>Date of last inspection</b>	18/04/2013
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## Service information

### Brief description of the service

This home is operated by a private provider and is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to of four young people with learning disabilities, two of whom may have concurrent 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**.

The home has demonstrated some capacity to improve since the last full inspection in April 2013 in which it was judged inadequate. However, the home has yet to embed and sustain these changes sufficiently in order to fully evaluate the impact this has had on young people. Equally the home has been without a Registered Manager for over 14 weeks. In view of this, an adequate judgement has been made to reflect that improvement has been made since the last inspection.

Young people benefit from individualised care based on their needs, wishes and preferences. As a result, young people experience positive outcomes. They make progress in all areas of their lives. Young people have positive views about the home and their relationships with the staff team. A young person commented that 'the staff help me'.

Safeguarding practice has improved since the last inspection. Young people are safe and feel safe. Good monitoring systems ensure that health and safety is appropriately managed. All staff are appropriately trained and the safety of young people is now better promoted.

As a result of this inspection, four recommendations for improvement have been made. These principally relate to safeguarding. The home's safeguarding policy has not been sent to the local safeguarding board for review; there is no specific policy for the use of electronic monitoring alarms; and fire drills do not take place at different times of the day. Furthermore, the young person's guide does not contain

the correct telephone number for Ofsted. There is no demonstrable impact, to date, on the outcomes for young people as a result of these shortfalls.

## Areas for improvement

### Recommendations

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

- ensure that where specific measures, including electronic devices, are used to monitor children, there is a written policy that sets out how they should be used, how they promote the welfare of 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 measures (NMS 10.5)
- ensure that there is an emergency escape plan that all staff and children are familiar with and have practiced so they know what to do in an emergency. This specifically relates to ensuring fire drills take place at different times of the day (NMS 10.9)
- ensure that the children's guide includes a summary of what the home sets out to do for children, how they can find out their rights, how a child can contact their IRO, the Children's Rights Director, Ofsted if they wish to raise a concern with inspectors, and how to secure access to an independent advocate (NMS 13.5)
- ensure that the provider's child protection procedures are submitted for consideration and comment to the Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) and to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) for Child Protection (or other senior officers responsible for child protection matters in that department) and are consistent with the local policies and procedures agreed by the LSCB relevant to the geographical area of the home. Any conflicts between locally agreed procedures and those of other responsible authorities are discussed and resolved as far as possible. (NMS 20.4)

### Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people are happy at the home and enjoy spending time with the staff and each other. A range of games, activities and trips to the local and wider community help young people develop their interests. They are happy, settled and relaxed as a result. A social worker commented that a young person is 'happy at the home'.

Young people develop appropriate skills for adulthood. They learn how to maintain their own personal space, complete basic domestic tasks and contribute to group living. This results in young people becoming more independent.

Young people make good progress in developing and maintaining positive behaviour. They develop tolerance and understanding of their peers and learn to live harmoniously together. This ensures that young people develop skills in tolerating others and sharing communal spaces. A young person's doctor commented that there is a 'reduction in challenging behaviour' and that a young person is 'doing very well at the home'.

Young people eat healthily at the home and enjoy an active lifestyle. As a result, they develop their personal fitness and general well-being. They take part in regular trips and activities in the local and wider community. A range of age and ability appropriate equipment ensures all young people enjoy activities at the home.

All young people are actively involved in appropriate educational placements. As a result, they regularly attend and make good progress. Furthermore, young people are encouraged to develop their knowledge and skills through personal study at home. For example, young people learn about personal safety and 'stranger danger'. As a result, they develop skills in keeping themselves safe in the local and wider community.

Young people develop their emotional security and resilience at the home. They are actively encouraged, where it is appropriate to do so, to maintain their family relationships. This ensures that young people develop and sustain their emotional attachments. Furthermore, where young people have friendships in the local community, they are encouraged to maintain these links. As a result, young people develop a wide range of social skills.

## **Quality of care**

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

There have been notable improvements since the last inspection. The staff team are more conscientious in recording the progress that young people make. Enhanced recording has led to a more focused approach to meeting young people's needs.

Staff actively consult with young people and seek their views on a range of matters. For example, young people help to choose décor, meals, activities and equipment for the home. Regular records of progress are made and shared with parents, carers and placing authorities. As a result, the staff team are able to evidence the improvements to young people's outcomes.

The staff team ensure that young people have a voice in the home. Regular young people's meetings discuss activities, food choices and plans for the home. This ensures that young people feel involved in the home and know that their views are respected and listened to.

Young people are encouraged and supported to raise their concerns, worries or complaints. A freely available telephone ensures that young people can contact family, friends and support services. A young person's guide further promotes access

to services of support. The communication needs of young people are addressed through a separate guide that is written in symbol format. This ensures that young people with additional communication needs are able to access the information. However, one of the guides does not contain the correct telephone number for Ofsted. This shortfall has not impacted on the outcomes for young people.

Young people's files are regularly updated and contain all required information. Since the last inspection, there are marked improvements in recording. For example, the religious needs of young people are clearly recorded. This is further enhanced through close work with parents, carers and placing authorities to ensure information is correct and relevant. As a result, young people receive care that is based on their needs, preferences and cultural requirements. Staff with key working responsibilities, regularly discuss the progress that young people make. These discussions are recorded on the young people's files. This ensures that any concerns are quickly identified and robustly addressed.

Complaints from young people, parents, carers and placing authorities are extremely rare. A comprehensive complaints policy is in place and is readily promoted to young people. Regular young people meetings ensure that young people are able to share their views, wishes and feelings. Furthermore, the choices of young people are sought and acted upon. For example, young people choose menus for the home and discuss activity choices. This results in an environment that is responsive to young people's views and which provides care based on their preferences.

Relationships between young people and staff are highly positive. Young people enjoy spending time with staff. A young person commented that 'the staff are kind'. The staff know the young people well and provide individualised care. Where young people are unable to verbally communicate, the staff team ensure that appropriate support is given. For example, the use of supportive communication methods, including electronic aids, ensures that all young people can communicate with staff. As a result, the staff team are able to meet the needs of young people. This results in a home where young people feel respected, valued and listened to by staff. A social worker commented that, 'young people's relationships with the staff are good.'

Medication procedures are safe and effective. All staff are competent in administering young people's medication and detailed records are kept. Medication is regularly audited. This ensures that stock levels are correct and any errors are quickly identified and addressed. Young people now benefit from a dedicated medication administering area in the home. This ensures that young people can receive their medicines in a quiet and discreet area. This further promotes their dignity. The health needs of young people are well met. The staff team ensure that all health needs are met and planned appointments maintained. A health professional commented that 'the staff team have helped the young person' and that 'the staff work well to support health needs'.

The home is well maintained and attractively presented. All areas of the home are clean, tidy and appropriate to the needs of the young people. Areas of the home have been redecorated and where stained, windows have been replaced. These

improvements have enhanced the look and feel of the home. Furthermore, attention has been given to the outside of the home. The garden is well-kept and young people enjoy spending time outside with staff and their peers. The acting manager has purchased additional toys, games and activities. As a result, young people enjoy access to a wide range of stimulating and enjoyable activities. A young person, when asked about the home, said 'I love it here'.

### **Safeguarding children and young people**

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

Safeguarding practice has improved since the last inspection. The concerns noted in April 2013 are now fully resolved. The acting manager has ensured that the necessary steps have been taken to promote the safety and well-being of young people.

All staff are trained in safeguarding and know how to raise concerns. This is effectively underpinned by a clear safeguarding policy in the home. However, this policy has not been sent to the local safeguarding children board or local authority designated officer. To date, this shortfall has not impacted on the outcomes for young people. However, a recommendation has been made for the relevant services to review the home's safeguarding policy for suitability.

Adults wishing to work at the home are appropriately recruited. All required checks are made and detailed personnel files maintained in the home. This ensures that all staff are appropriately vetted prior to employment. As a result, young people are protected from unsuitable adults who may wish to harm them.

Restraint is only used for the purposes of keeping young people safe from harm. All staff are appropriately trained in the home's chosen method of restraint. As a result, staff are confident and competent in managing challenging behaviour. Records of restraint are clear, objective and contain all required details. The views of young people are also sought, and where young people are unable to communicate verbally, additional communication methods are used. This ensures that all young people are able to raise any concerns, worries or issues about restraint.

Sanctions are rarely used in the home. However, where young people display unacceptable behaviour, they are given appropriate and fair consequences in line with their ability and understanding. As a result, young people are encouraged to display and develop socially acceptable behaviours and learn that there are consequences to negative behaviours. This results in an environment that is fair, proportionate and tolerant. Young people live harmoniously together and there are no incidents of bullying.

Young people are protected from harm as a result of thorough risk assessment. All areas of the home and activities that young people take part in are checked and evaluated for risks. This ensures that young people are safe in the home.

Electronic monitoring devices are in use in the home. This further adds to young people's safety and well-being as staff are alerted to young people leaving their rooms during the night. Although the home's Statement of Purpose describes the use of these measures, there is no specific written policy governing their use. This shortfall has not led to a negative impact on young people.

Fire safety has improved since the last inspection in April 2013. All staff are now appropriately trained in fire safety. Regular fire drills ensure that young people and staff know how to evacuate in the event of fire. However, fire drills are regularly held in evening times only. As a result, young people are not fully practised at evacuation in daylight hours. There is no demonstrable impact on the outcomes for young people and a recommendation has been made.

The environment is safe and regularly checked for defects. All required checks on electrical and gas installations are in place. The staff team ensure that any defects are swiftly identified and resolved. As a result, young people live in a home that is safely maintained and free from avoidable hazards. A young person commented that 'I am safe.' A parent commented that 'I know that he is safe there'.

## **Leadership and management**

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

The home was last inspected in April 2013 and was judged to be inadequate. Nine requirements and three recommendations were made. An unannounced monitoring visit took place in June 2013 to ensure that the home was meeting regulations. No concerns were noted at this time although the home has now been without a Registered Manager for 14 weeks. An individual has now been put forward for registration and a registration decision will shortly be made.

However, the organisation has not ensured that the Registered Manager vacancy has been appropriately addressed. While this has not impacted on the outcomes for young people, the overall effectiveness of the home is judged to be adequate. This is because the organisation has not ensured that prompt action has been taken to ensure a Registered Manager is in place. Furthermore, although the home has demonstrated some capacity to improve, the impact of improvements cannot be fully evaluated.

All nine requirements from the previous inspection have been fully met. As a result, the safety, outcomes and quality of care for young people have now improved. Furthermore, the three recommendations have similarly been met; young people now benefit from a well maintained and homely environment, there have been improvements to monitoring records and a clear development plan is now in place.

All staff are now appropriately trained in fire safety and restraint. Regular staff supervision ensures that areas of practice, the needs of young people and areas for development are discussed. Appraisals have taken place for the whole staff team. This ensures that all staff have had their training and development needs addressed



and resolved. Staff feel valued, supported and are clear in their duties. Furthermore, the acting manager has ensured that staff are up-to-date with all mandatory training including safeguarding, health and safety, food hygiene and first aid. As a result, staff are appropriately trained and competent in their duties.

The home's Statement of Purpose is now up to date, contains all required information and has been sent to Ofsted as required. Furthermore, parents, carers and placing authorities now benefit from a home that has a clear structure and overview of their service. As a result, the home's aims and objectives are explained and available to view by relevant parties.

Records are securely stored in the home. This ensures that confidential information relating to young people is appropriately protected. Young people's records are audited to ensure that they are up to date and appropriate. The progress that young people make is appropriately recorded and acted upon. The acting manager ensures that where there are concerns, they are quickly rectified.

The acting manager has devised a development plan for the home. The plan sets out a range of targets for the home and is regularly checked. However, the plan is not yet fully embedded into the home as a result of being newly implemented. Improved quality assurance processes mean that the home is more robustly monitored. The acting manager has implemented regular checks in accordance with the Children's Homes Regulations 2011. Consultation with young people, parents, carers and placing authorities ensures that their views are sought, recorded and acted upon. As a result, areas for development and improvement are now better identified and acted upon.

Regular monitoring visits now take place from within the organisation and these reports are sent to Ofsted as required. This means that the regulator is able to review the home's operation and compliance with regulations. These reports identify strengths and weaknesses. The acting manager ensures that any areas for improvement are acted upon.

## 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.