

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	19/11/2013
Inspector	Bill Drumm
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This children's resource unit is operated by a local authority. It provides short breaks for up to nine children with learning disabilities and complex health care needs and for children who have autism. The service is provided from two sites.

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**.

The resource centre is split across two separate locations and provides a highly personalised short break service to young people with disabilities. Each young person has a clear care plan which incorporates individualised day and night-time routines. Staff are attentive to young people's changing needs. Care plans are reviewed regularly in order to keep up-to-date with those changing needs. This helps to keep young people safe and well.

Staff are committed, and use innovative approaches to ensure, where possible, the views of young people are listened to in the running of the home. This includes the use of electronic tablets and associated software. It is very much a 'needs led' service and the home is well equipped to meet the needs of all the young people who stay there. All young people have made progress and continue to make progress.

The quality of care is good. Keyworkers have a thorough knowledge and understanding of the young people in their care and have developed positive relationships with families, education providers and health care staff. This allows the building of trust which enables consistent care for the young people. Since the last inspection, the Registered Manager has resigned. The organisation has made alternative arrangements to ensure the home runs properly and that staff receive the supervision and support they need to care for young people.

Areas identified for improvement relate to the recruitment and selection recording process for staff; the independent monitoring of the service; the admissions and discharge register; the monthly checks carried out by the home's manager and the

recording of young people's monies. These shortfalls have not directly impacted on young people's safety and welfare.

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
26 (2001)	ensure that full and satisfactory information is available in relation to all staff in respect of each of the matters specified in Schedule 2 (Regulation 26 (3)(d))	31/01/2014
33 (2001)	ensure that external monitoring is consistently completed within both buildings within the resource centre, including : interviews, with children accommodated there, their parents relatives and persons working at the home as appears necessary in order to form an opinion of the standard of care provided in the home especially in relation to parental contact and feedback. (Regulation 33 (4)(a))	31/01/2014

Recommendations

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

- ensure all staff and young people are given the opportunity to discuss the incidents of restraint they have been involved in, witnessed or been affected by, with a relevant adult (NMS 3.17)
- monitor, in line with regulations, all records kept by the home to ensure compliance with the homes policies, to identify any concerns about specific incidents and to identify patterns and trends. Immediate action is taken to address any issues raised by this monitoring (NMS 21.2)
- ensure all information relating to a child is recorded clearly and in a way which will be helpful to the child when they access their files now or in the future. (NMS 22.5)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people make good progress in developing their self-esteem, self-confidence

and life skills. A parent of one young person said, 'I feel my child is well looked after, she is encouraged to improve her self-help skills, from unpacking her case and looking after her clothes to shopping for and helping prepare meals. A parent of another young person said, 'My daughter attended the home for several years and her confidence and communication skills really improved.' Within the limits of their ability, young people have developed good positive relationships with both staff and each other. Where appropriate, individual friendships are promoted and young people enjoy spending time together. This means that young people are able to enjoy the company of others outside of their family home and, over time, they can become more independent, confident and outgoing.

The staff team are well trained in caring for young people with complex health needs and disabilities. They have developed their understanding of each young person's non-verbal communication and general presentation. This helps them to understand or appreciate when a young person is anxious about something or feels unwell. Additionally, staff have developed positive working relationships with health care practitioners. This helps to ensure that staff understand each young person's health care needs and are supported by health care practitioners to meet those needs. A parent of one young person said, 'My son has a really good relationship with all the staff and they tend to his needs in a very professional manner'. This means that young people's health needs are met well, they can enjoy participating in a wide range of activities while at the home and they continue to make progress.

Young people are able to experience a full and varied programme of activities at the home, examples of which include camping in the garden, visits to community carnivals and participating in fund raising events. All young people are encouraged to develop their independence and daily living skills. The outcome is that young people make positive progress in developing their social skills and confidence in accessing a range of activities both in-house and in the community.

All young people attend education and staff have very positive links with all education providers. Transport arrangements within the home ensure that young people attend regularly and on time. In addition, transport arrangements help to ensure young people arrive safely. Young people are supported to continue making progress with their learning and to achieve their maximum potential.

Quality of care

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

Comprehensive assessments of need are carried out prior to any young person accessing this service. This includes details of their physical and mental health as well as any specific conditions they may have. Staff are trained in the safe handling and administration of medication and regular audits are carried out to ensure the integrity of the systems and processes used by staff. Where mistakes have been highlighted, the home's acting manager takes decisive action to ensure the risks to young people are minimised and their parents are kept fully informed. In addition, staff work in partnership with health care practitioners and specialists to meet the

medical and psychological needs of young people. This helps to ensure the health care needs of all young people are met.

The staff team have high aspirations for all the young people in their care and are actively encouraged to think of new ways to involve them in stimulating activities and the world around them. Firm consistent behaviour management ensures young people are able to learn socially acceptable behaviour and to develop positive relationships with adults and peers. This in turn helps to ensure young people's social skills improve and they are able to develop new skills.

Young people's individual needs are paramount and staff utilise a range of resources to involve them as much as possible in their own care. One young person who returned an inspection questionnaire said they fully agreed with their care plan. Use of electronic tablets with associated software packages, signing and picture exchange systems enable young people to communicate with staff about their likes and dislikes as well as make informed choices on a day-to-day basis. A parent of one young person said, 'Staff are always helpful and extremely caring towards my son. I don't have any concerns leaving him in their very capable hands.' Young people's care needs are discussed regularly in team meetings and individual supervision sessions to ensure staff deliver consistently high levels of care. Young people have comprehensive care plans and they receive individualised care which is regularly reviewed. This helps to ensure their needs continue to be met at the home.

Young people are supported and enabled wherever possible to make individual choices with regard to their own lives and the things they would like to enjoy. One young person who returned an inspection questionnaire said they felt listened to and that they get help to be more independent.

Both buildings are well maintained and spacious, with outside space utilised whenever possible when the weather permits. The location of both buildings enables easy access for parents and young people and allows young people the opportunity to visit the local shops, parks and leisure facilities.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Each young person has a comprehensive risk assessment in place which is monitored and reviewed at regular intervals. Changes in need or levels of risk are quickly highlighted and preventative action taken. This helps to keep young people safe and free from harm.

All relevant health and safety checks are up-to-date and certificates are in place which helps to ensure the safety and well-being of the young people, visitors to the home and staff. Young people who access this service have a combination of medical health needs, specific conditions or challenging behaviour. High levels of staff supervision and oversight ensure young people do not go missing from the home and they remain safe and well. A parent of one young person said, 'I feel my child is safe while staying at the home and I can relax knowing this.'

Young people are encouraged, within the limits of their ability, to develop positive behaviour. Behaviour plans are integral to the care planning process and are reviewed, amended and updated at regular intervals. Staff work hard and in partnership with parents and other professionals to ensure young people are enabled to maximise their potential.

Punitive measures such as sanctions for displaying negative behaviour are seldom, if ever, used. Staff use their skills, patience and abilities to continually promote and reinforce boundaries and positive behaviour with young people. One staff member said, 'Praise is a much better incentive.' Occasionally, staff are required to hold a young person to prevent them being harmed. Written records relating to these incidents are fully recorded. However, staff nor young people are not routinely spoken to by someone independent of the incident. They may not therefore feel fully supported after the incident.

Staff are fully trained in safeguarding and child protection procedures. They are fully aware of the signs and symptoms of abuse and know the procedures to follow if they suspect abuse may be taking place. This means that young people are safeguarded by safe working practices.

The home's complaints procedures are made available to parents and young people in a range of different formats to aid understanding. Some young people who access the service are unable to verbally communicate their anxieties, fears or concerns. Staff have developed a thorough understanding of the body language used by some young people and are able to determine if they have any worries. This means that staff are able to act appropriately in order to meet that young person's needs.

Most of the home's recruitment and selection processes are robust and well established, to help ensure young people are kept safe from harm. However, in a single episode one written reference had not been verbally checked for its authenticity and any gaps in employment had not been fully explored or explained. This means that staff caring for young people may not be fully cleared.

Leadership and management

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

Since the last inspection, the home's Registered Manager has resigned. The organisation has made alternative arrangements to ensure the home runs properly and that staff receive the supervision and support they need to care for young people. Ofsted will write to the acting manager to remind them of the need to become registered.

The home has an admissions and discharge register to record who has been admitted to the home and how long they used the service. However, the legal status under which young people may be accommodated is not recorded. Therefore the information contained within the register does not provide an accurate record and

does not contribute to a sufficient understanding of the young person's life.

Staff commented that they receive, regular training opportunities. This includes refresher training to keep their skills up to date as well as opportunities to attend other training to learn new skills. In addition, new staff undertake the national training organisation's induction standards which helps to prepare them for residential work. Staff members retain the skills and competencies they have and are encouraged to develop new ones. New staff are appropriately inducted into the children's home.

The home's Statement of Purpose is clearly written and provides an accurate reflection of what the home is meant to achieve for both young people and their parents. Placing social workers are clear about the aims and objectives of the home and what services and facilities it provides. The document is regularly reviewed to make sure it remains relevant and up-to-date.

The home's acting manager provides support to the staff team and has a system in place to ensure regular, formal supervision takes place. This helps staff members to know what is expected of them and to feel supported in their work. One member of staff spoken to said, 'I think we have great support here. We support each other and the atmosphere is excellent.' Young people receive consistent care from a well-supported staff team. Members of staff understand each young person's individual strengths and needs. Working practices are consistent and enable young people to feel safe.

Young people's files are detailed and well ordered. This information is used well by staff to inform their care of young people. Monitoring visits from someone independent of the home take place every month. Due to the building split, there is not always a consistent visitor presence in each part of the centre each month as required. This means that the person undertaking these visits cannot always talk to all staff on duty, all young people or their relatives.

The home's acting manager also monitors the care provided to young people as well as a range of written records within the home. These checks take place on a regular basis. However, in a number of the records anomalies are recorded with regard to the young people's finances. The records show that the anomalies have been recognised but there is no record to show what specific action has been taken to address these. Additionally, issues relating to the safe recruitment of staff and the home's admissions and discharge register have also not been addressed as part of this monitoring process. This means that the monitoring process is not as thorough as it should be, and improvements to practice within those areas identified for action, is not always evident.

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.