

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Philip Cass
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This home is operated by the local authority. It provides a residential service for six children and young people, and a short-break service for six children and young people. All the children and young people have severe learning disabilities and challenging behaviours.

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**.

The home provides a nurturing and stimulating environment for young people to live and take short breaks. It has operated to an exceptionally high standard for several years, and continues to do so. This is because the managers and staff are committed to continual improvement and are not complacent. Robust quality assurance systems are effective in identifying areas that can be improved. Managers ensure that staff have sufficient time and resources to make these improvements.

The quality of care is excellent. Care plans are detailed and comprehensive. They fully reflect the needs and wishes of young people. The home is very creative in finding ways to ascertain the views of young people who have communication difficulties. Staff demonstrate great warmth and affection in their interactions with young people. They are very attentive to the needs of young people and take great care to promote their well-being and safety. Young people are safe because they are carefully monitored by staff.

Outcomes are also exceptional. All young people have very high levels of school attendance and make great progress from their starting point at the time of placement. Young people become better able to socialise, grow in confidence, and develop a range of skills that support a smooth transition to adult care services. The views of parents are exceptionally positive. Many parents provided their views to Ofsted about the service. They describe the home as 'brilliant', 'fantastic', 'excellent', 'extremely good', 'outstanding', and 'wonderful'.

It is recommended that the home ensures that all supervision records are signed by the supervisor to confirm the accuracy of the records.

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 written records of supervision held for each member of staff are signed by the supervisor at the end of the supervision. (NMS 19.5)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **outstanding**.

Staff have high aspirations for all young people and ensure that they achieve to their full potential. The home sets clear objectives for each child every day. All achievements are recorded. This ensures that there is a clear focus on positive outcomes. Young people make excellent progress in learning self-care skills. This means that young people become confident in their abilities. A parent states that the staff, 'actively encourage my child to be independent'. The home is good at supporting transitions to adult care provisions. Because transitions are carefully planned, young people are well supported to move on from the home. Very good use is made of photographs and pictures to help young people understand their future plans. This means that young people actively participate in decisions about their lives.

The home is very supportive of family contact arrangements for young people who live at the home. Parents report that they feel welcome and very comfortable with staff. Young people benefit because, where appropriate, their families can visit them regularly and take an active role in their lives. Because the home works flexibly to support parents and families, the quality and quantity of family contact are maximised.

Young people make very good progress at school. They have exceptionally good attendance and make considerable progress. Individual educational targets are achieved. School reports are positive and reflect the social and academic progress of young people. Young people grow in self-confidence and self-esteem as they experience success and achieve well at school. A young person states that school is 'good'.

Young people have excellent health outcomes. They begin to understand the importance of healthy living and are supported to make healthy lifestyle choices. For example, young people are encouraged to eat a balanced and nutritious diet. Staff overcome resistance to eating healthy foods by offering praise and rewards when young people make good food choices. Parents feel that the willingness of young

people to try new foods 'is especially due to the hard work and effort from the cook' at the home. All young people have access to a range of health services including speech and language therapy and specialist support in sensory modulation. Health outcomes are further promoted because medication administration systems are safe and effective.

Quality of care

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

Interactions between staff and young people are excellent. Carers are very attentive to all the needs of young people. Where young people are non-verbal, staff are highly skilled at interpreting presenting behaviours and responding to them. This ensures that incidents where young people become frustrated or upset are greatly minimised. Staff are consistently positive and encouraging. They reward young people with praise whenever possible. As a result, young people interact well. A key strength of the home is the way that staff show warmth and affection towards young people. A parent commented: 'The staff are excellent and thoroughly committed to meeting my child's needs. They have a great understanding of my child's condition and communicate well with him.'

The home produces comprehensive and child-focused care plans. Great efforts are made to establish the wishes and views of young people. Young people feel secure and comfortable in their home because staff understand their individual tastes and preferences. In the short breaks service, considerable care is taken to ensure that young people are well matched. This promotes the well-being and safety of each young person. Care plans contain detailed information about individual needs that stem from the child or young person's background, culture or religion. This means that the home addresses issues of diversity well in care planning. Keyworkers display a very strong understanding of their role. Consequently, they are pro-active in overseeing the implementation of care plans, liaising with families and external agencies, and providing individual support for the young people.

Young people have access to an extensive range of resources that enable them to enjoy their leisure time in the home. These include soft play areas, well-equipped sensory rooms, a sensory garden, and outdoor play facilities. Young people also enjoy a range of activities outside the home. They are able to build friendships and expand social networks because they take part in local youth groups, including a teen disco tailored to disabled young people. A recent holiday was carefully planned, and very well organised. Consequently, it was a very positive experience for all involved. Staff have also supported young people to attend residential adventure holidays. This ensures that disability is not a barrier to participation in enriching and stimulating activities.

Good communication with education providers and parents ensures that the transfer of young people between schools, the home, and families is smooth and does not unnecessarily distress young people. As a result, young people arrive at school ready to learn and participate. Regular meetings with teachers mean that key information

is shared effectively. Managers confidently challenge any decisions that might limit the opportunities for young people to achieve exceptional education outcomes. This means that they act as highly effective advocates for young people.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

The home is a safe environment. Young people are provided with information about safety that is adapted well to their level of understanding. The home is very creative in finding ways to help young people to understand key issues of personal safety. For example, a young person has been helped to understand the role of the emergency services through pictures and stories. Where young people are not able to comprehend risk, they are provided with high levels of supervision and monitored carefully. Good supervision of young people contributes to the fact that young people do not go missing from the home.

Staff have an excellent understanding of safeguarding policy and practice. This means that they know what to do if they are worried that a child has experienced abuse, or is at risk of abuse. The home operates in a very transparent way. Where appropriate, parents are able to visit at all reasonable times and can observe the care that their children receive. Managers are conscious of the particular vulnerabilities of disabled children and have created an open culture where staff can freely report concerns. A range of communication methods are used to ensure that young people understand how to complain or raise concerns about their treatment. This minimises the risk of abuse.

Safe recruitment practice ensures that adults working at the home are carefully vetted to ensure their suitability to work with vulnerable young people. These checks include telephone verification of references and criminal record checks. Restraint is infrequent and used only to ensure the safety of young people. All staff receive training to minimise the risk of accidental injury or trauma to young people during a restraint.

The home has strong and effective health and safety systems that are built around comprehensive risk assessment. It has recently improved risk assessment systems. This ensures that all potentially hazardous activities are thoroughly evaluated by managers or specialist advisors. Gas, electrical and fire safety systems are tested regularly by qualified engineers. An inspection by the local authority environmental health department awarded the home a five-star rating. This means that the home has very high standards of food safety.

Leadership and management

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

The experienced and highly competent manager is well supported by his

management team. Although no requirements or recommendations were set at the previous inspection, the home has clear strategies for improvement. These are set out in the home's detailed and ambitious development plan. The plan has driven improvements in management arrangements, staff meetings, support for new staff, shift planning, and risk assessment. This ensures that the previous success of the home does not generate a culture of complacency.

Improvement is also promoted by robust quality assurance processes. These systems are good at identifying weaknesses and potential shortfalls. Actions generated through quality assurance processes are positively addressed by the home and result in improved standards of care. The home is very good at responding to complaints. The complaint procedure is used positively by the manager to make sure that the views of young people, their families, and other stakeholders are acknowledged, respected and acted upon.

The home employs a sufficient number of staff to meet the needs of young people. Recruitment processes are rigorous and challenging. Although the learning difficulties of young people mean that it is not practicable for them to take part in staff recruitment, their parents sit on interview panels and inform all recruitment decisions. This ensures that staff are of the highest calibre. Specialist trainers have been commissioned to deliver team-building sessions in the home. These have supported the staff to work together effectively to meet the needs of young people. Performance management systems are well understood and effective in ensuring that work practice is of the highest standard. Managers have consulted with staff to identify ways of improving staff meetings. As a result, there is now a greater focus on the needs of young people, better decision making, and more constructive information sharing.

Staff receive regular supervision that they find helpful and supportive. Supervision is used very well to identify developmental and training opportunities for staff. This means that staff are empowered to develop specialist knowledge and expertise that improve the quality of care provided to young people. Managers also use supervision effectively to set high expectations and challenge staff to improve the quality of care provided. However, because some supervision records are not signed by supervisors, they are not fully complete. This shortfall was addressed during the inspection. Managers and staff are very well trained to carry out their roles. As a result, staff are very competent in safeguarding, restraint, first aid, administration of specialist medication, and fire safety. They also have a good understanding of equality and diversity.

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.