

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Sharon Lewis
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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* (March 2011) and the evaluation schedule for children's homes.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: a service that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

Good: a service that exceeds minimum requirements

Satisfactory: a service that only meets minimum requirements

Inadequate: a service that does not meet minimum requirements

Service information

Brief description of the service

The home is situated close to local amenities, shops, a leisure centre and transport links. The home can accommodate eight children with physical and learning disabilities, between the ages of 10 and 18 years. There is a garden with wheelchair access to the ground floor of the building. There is a lift to the first floor but this floor is not fully accessible to people using wheelchairs.

The young people are accommodated in single bedrooms and have access to a lounge, dining room and external playroom. Some parking is available to the rear of the building.

Overall effectiveness

The overall effectiveness is judged to be **satisfactory**.

Young people report that they are happy and that they feel safe. The home has significant strengths, such as an excellent understanding of equality and diversity issues. Young people enjoy individualised support and engage in a variety of life enhancing activities. They receive support from a diverse and well supported staff team. Areas of development relate to health and nutrition records, the restraint log and the home's safeguarding procedures. Records are not sufficiently robust and safeguarding procedures have not been updated to reflect new guidance. These factors impact on the overall quality of care and so three recommendations are made to improve practice.

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
13 (2001)	ensure food provided is suitable for young peoples' needs. This relates to the need for more robust records that outline the steps staff take to address weight loss (Regulation 13 (1) (a) (iii))	01/06/2011
11 (2001)	promote and make proper provision for the welfare of children and ensure all staff know the procedures regarding ill health (Regulation 11(1) (a))	01/06/2011

17B (2001)	record in the restraint log the effectiveness, consequences and confirmation that the child has been spoken to regarding each restraint (Regulation 17B(3) (f) (h))	01/06/2011
16 (2001)	update the home's safeguarding procedure to include the requirement that persons working at the home may report concerns to a list of external persons. (Regulation 16 (2) (f) & (g))	01/06/2011

Recommendations

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

- submit the updated child protection procedure to the Local Safeguarding Children Board and to the Local Authority Designated Officer for consideration and comment (NMS 20.4)
- record the length of each supervision meeting (NMS 19.5)
- introduce a system to monitor the quality and adequacy of record keeping. (NMS 22.1)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for children and young people are **satisfactory**.

Young people principally enjoy a positive quality of life. Young people are learning socially acceptable behaviour and developing self confidence. Young people state they are 'happy' and are very comfortable in their surroundings. Generally young people are in good physical, emotional and psychological health. Staff have a good understanding of young people's needs and effectively manage their feelings and moods. There is an issue regarding record keeping. An example is the monitoring of young people's poor appetite. During these periods staff do not effectively record the details of young people's food intake. It is therefore difficult to ascertain if young people are receiving appropriate levels of nutrition. Records do not robustly detail the necessary information.

All young people enjoy attending school and there is realistic educational attainment. Staff celebrate young people's achievements. The home continues to provide a learning environment for young people, for example, young people acquire practical and life skills that prepares them for adulthood. Staff encourage each young person in accordance with their capabilities, and where possible, young people attend to their own personal hygiene. Young people are able to make their own breakfast, make drinks and receive support with meal preparation. They undertake household tasks that include vacuuming, making their bed, attending to their laundry and ironing. All young people are able to communicate their choices on a daily basis. Young people choose their own clothes, contribute to menu plans and also activities in which they wish to participate.

Young people have the opportunity to positively engage with the wider community. They attend groups in their locality where they learn new skills. They generally use public transport which promotes a reasonable level of social inclusion. Young people benefit from appropriate contact with family, friends and others who have an important role in their lives. They enjoy trips to their family home and family members also visit them. Staff flexibly facilitate contact and young people receive regular phone calls. Staff keep parents and professionals updated on young people's progress.

Quality of care

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

Young people receive an adequate service. Staff understand young people's individual needs, which provides a positive foundation for working relationships. Young people generally interact constructively with staff and each other. There is an atmosphere of mutual respect and a wish to enhance young people's quality of life. Young people are able to influence decision making. They meet regularly as a group and individually with their key worker. Pictorial aids and specialist communication equipment enables young people to effectively express their wishes and feelings. The pictorial complaints procedure is a further example of empowering young people to share their views.

Young people's placement plans capture their individuality very well. Staff incorporate the Every Child Matters outcome areas which appropriately addresses all areas of young people's lives. Young people easily understand their plans, as these include photographs and pictures. Young people take a key role in producing their care plan, and this ensures the plans uniquely detail their respective needs. Plans include young people's cultural background, disability, gender, communication needs and their religious belief. Young people learn how to sensitively manage their sexuality and they receive sexual awareness training.

Medication arrangements are sound. Young people receive care from staff who are first aid trained. There is, however, an issue with the monitoring of young people's health as practices within the home are inconsistent. This relates to the management of ill health and poor appetite. There are clear procedures in relation to responding to ill health, however all staff do not follow these procedures. A staff member states that they would not record if a young person was vomiting, because this was usual behaviour for this young person. Records are not sufficiently robust, as although staff may record symptoms, these are not in sufficient detail to effectively monitor a young person's health.

Young people engage in a wide range of activities which focuses on their individual interests. Young people enjoy army cadets, swimming, gymnastics, dance classes, drama, playing football, horse riding, shopping, going to church, the park and the cinema. Within the home, young people engage in both indoor and outdoor activities. They enjoy art and craft work in the summer house, and the garden includes a large trampoline and a basketball net. Staff nurture young people's talents, such as providing a patch within the garden for a young person to grow their own vegetables.

Young people enjoy living in a well maintained property and they take pride in their accommodation. They have their own spacious rooms which uniquely express their personality. Soft furnishings, meaningful photographs and other mementoes contribute to the uniqueness of each bedroom. Mealtimes are a social occasion where young people eat together in the dining room. Young people relax and watch television in the lounge, where bean bags and leathers sofas provide comfortable seating. Young people benefit from the home being near to shops, services and amenities.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people state that they feel safe. There are no issues with bullying or young people going missing. The one-to-one staffing ensures that young people receive appropriate supervision and individual attention. Staff promote positive behaviour and young people are making steady progress with developing their social skills and acceptable behaviour. Staff rarely have to restrain young people. If this does occur it is mainly to protect a young person from serious harm. Current restraint records do not fully comply with regulations. They do not contain references to the effectiveness, consequences and young people's feelings in respect of the restraint, although this information is available in other documentation.

Young people live in a physically safe and secure environment. Specialist engineers confirm the safety of the electrical and gas supplies and fire safety equipment. Young people additionally contribute to fire safety as they work alongside staff when undertaking the weekly alarm tests for example. Young people also participate in and record fire drills. This helps young people learn a new skill and develop a greater sense of responsibility. The sound recruitment procedure ensures suitable persons work with young people and the disciplinary procedure sufficiently addresses employee concerns.

Safeguarding practices are acceptable. Young people learn the importance of personal safety. Staff receive training in safeguarding children and adults. A good aspect of this training involves learning the difference between appropriate and inappropriate touching. All staff know to report any allegations or concerns to their manager. However, staff are unaware that that they could also report concerns to persons outside of the organisation. They are also unaware of the local authority safeguarding representatives. The home's safeguarding procedure does not detail this information, and the procedure has not been updated to reflect new government guidance. However this has not had a detrimental impact to date. Management appropriately liaises with external agencies when addressing safeguarding issues.

Leadership and management

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

Young people benefit from a large, stable and well supported staff team. The gender-balanced staff team consists of persons from a variety of cultures, which ensures young people receive care specific to their needs. Young people receive good continuity of care as the organisation has their own team of bank staff to cover in the event of emergencies. The head of care is temporarily covering the registered manager post. This is a positive arrangement as they previously worked at the home.

Staff receive regular good quality supervision. Supervision records detail the start date of each meeting, although the duration of each supervision is unavailable. There is an effective staff appraisal system, which highlights individual strengths and identified training needs. The vast majority of staff have the relevant national vocational qualification. Staff receive specialist ongoing training, which equips them for their role and responsibilities.

The home's Statement of Purpose is currently being updated to reflect the staff changes. Staff understand the aims and objectives of the home. There is a competent understanding of young people's needs. Staff assist young people to fulfil their potential. There is an appreciation and celebration of difference. Young people enjoy eating foods from a variety of cultures in the traditional manner. Staff escort young people on shopping trips to areas which reflect their culture. The home has also personalised their own electronic communication board. This includes a voice recognition device which enables young people to communicate more effectively.

Young people contribute to the varied quality assurance systems. The home demonstrates a strong capacity for improvement and the senior management team understand the home's strengths and areas of development. The introduction of a new senior management tier aims to strengthen the organisation. The former Regulation 33 visitor is taking on this new post. Young people are familiar with this person and their prior experience is beneficial.

The home effectively complies with actions from the previous inspection visit. The new recording system ensures staff maintain an extensive series of daily logs which cover each shift. There is also greater responsibility during the handover period. This provides better accountability and ensures staff are aware of pertinent issues. Staff also benefit from recent training in relation to report writing and general recording.

Equality and diversity practice is **outstanding**.