

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Mike Stapley
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This private children's home can accommodate eight children with physical and learning disabilities. 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 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**.

Young people are very settled at this home. Young people are relaxed and comfortable with the staff and their peers. The culture of this home can be described as 'one happy family'. This is because staff are reported to be good listeners, respect young people's needs, and proper space and time is given for individual young people.

Young people are making significant progress from the point of admission to the home and staff support all forms of progress for widening young people's potential. Young people make very good use of communication systems to express their wishes and needs.

Young people are supported by an excellent staff team who are familiar with their needs and vulnerabilities. As a result, safety is central to all aspects of care planning, shift planning and staffing arrangements.

Young people and staff are supported by an organisation that places a great deal of emphasis on training and development. There is a clear programme of development in place and a stable staff team who offer a high standard of care.

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
7 (2001)	ensure that the registered provider appoints an individual to manage the children's home. (Regulation 7 (1)(a))	31/08/2013

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people's personal needs, wishes and preferences are all taken into account, including their faith, cultural needs and disabilities. Young people's care plans clearly identify these preferences and include detailed guidance. Staff follow clear strategies outlined in care plans and as a result young people's preferences, for instance in relation to their diet and personal care routines are met.

The majority of young people at the home are non-verbal and use pictures and symbols to communicate with their peers and staff. Young people have opportunities to express their wishes and feelings through a range of different communication methods including pictures and computer software which maximises and promotes positive communication.

Staff respond proactively to young people's gestures and expressions, particularly when they may be distressed or concerned about an issue. A well-established key worker system is in place and this forms a strong basis for staff to understand how young people express themselves and how to respond appropriately.

Depending on their individual ability and understanding young people are able to live a healthy lifestyle. For example, sexual health and matters relating to puberty are explained to young people as they begin to mature. Staff work closely with other professionals to ensure that specialist care needs are carried out safely and correctly.

Good medical procedures ensure that young people's health needs are being met and that all outcomes of medical treatments are well documented and monitored. Young people's health is supported by well-established procedures that ensure the safe administration, receipt and storage of medication. Two members of staff sign the medication records which helps to ensure there are no errors when giving medication to young people. Young people's health and well-being benefits from a staff team that is well-trained in medical procedures.

All young people of school age are in full-time education and achieving 100%

attendance. Young people's progress varies, but generally they all make positive strides and do well. Young people are progressing and achieving their educational targets. Their learning benefits because staff have close working relationships with teachers and regularly attend young people's school meetings and education reviews. These relationships help staff gain a clear understanding of how young people who are post school leaving age are encouraged and supported to attend college or gain work experience where appropriate. For example, the home recently supported a young person to gain meaningful local employment which also helps with the transition from children's to adult services.

Young people are supported and engage in many different community-based activities. One young person is supported and attends a local Pentecostal church. The home has appropriate transport for the young people, which ensures they are not disadvantaged in accessing community resources.

Although the vast majority of young people do not communicate verbally, their abilities to contribute to the running of the house are not undermined. For example, personal care routines and menu planning take into account young people's wishes and views. Communication systems are used effectively to help young people make choices. Young people are able to express their views and wishes. The use of pictorial cards helps young people choose appropriate activities. The likes and dislikes of young people are appropriately recorded on young people's individual files. In addition the home has a weekly house meeting that young people are encouraged to attend to share their views and wishes. Young people enjoy living in a generous and well equipped environment. The home is very spacious and there is a large well-equipped garden which is used a great deal particularly during the summer months.

Staff act as advocates for young people and help to prepare them for moving on. Such transitions can be very difficult as relationships have been formed with staff and peers alike. However staff at the home work closely with social workers and other professionals to ensure such transitions are successful and are handled in a sensitive and caring manner.

Quality of care

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

The home uses a person-centred planning model to support the young people at the home. Young people are encouraged to attend their reviews and give their views where possible, although they are not involved in the formal planning process. All young people have a key worker whose main focus is to work closely with other professionals to ensure the best outcomes for the young people. The key worker has regular meetings with the young people they are working with and these meetings are appropriately recorded and help to plan for the young person's future. Key workers contribute to young people's care plans and reports for reviews and, where possible, young people's views are sought about their care plans.

Young people's care plans are comprehensive and tailored to their personal and

diverse needs. They are consistent with the outcomes of young people's statutory reviews and are reviewed as the needs of young people change, for instance changes in their communication methods or daily routine. They therefore remain current and relevant.

Staff develop very positive relationships with the young people. They are very responsive towards young people's needs and they know how and what to do in any given situation. These relationships help to alleviate unnecessary stress or anxiety for young people. Staff listen to any issues young people may have and take action to address these. Parents, social workers and other significant professionals are encouraged and supported to advocate and voice any concerns on young people's behalf. Proactive measures are in place for responding to matters raised by parents.

The home operates good systems to help young people settle in quickly and meet their needs. Staff encourage young people, parents and carers to visit the home prior to admission and social workers assesses the suitability of the placement to

Young people admitted to the home are placed mainly on a long-term basis. However the home does offer respite care or short breaks where appropriate. A through assessment is undertaken by the home to ensure that any young person placed for respite care or short breaks is appropriately placed and will not cause any difficulties or disruption for those living at the home on a long-term basis.

Young people's personal space is furnished and personalised according to their needs and preferences. This includes any specialist equipment that may be needed to help support the young people.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people are kept safe through on-going supervision of their whereabouts and a high staff ratio. Young people's vulnerability is central to all aspects of care planning, risk management and the supervision of young people during off-site activities. Social workers commented that the staff go the 'extra mile' in caring and supporting the young people at the home. There have not been any concerns expressed by placing social workers.

Staff are vigilant and respond to young people's gestures, expressions and behaviours. They intervene early to signs of distress and this helps them, understand how children are feeling. The home operates a system of non-physical intervention although physical restraint may be used in exceptional circumstances if for example a young person becomes a danger to themselves or other residents. A number of books and electronic records are used for recording. All records were up-to-date at the time of this inspection and records are regularly monitored by senior managers. In addition, Regulation 33 and 34 monitoring reports are thorough and pick up on any outstanding matters.

There are no reported incidents of young people being missing from care. There is a clear policy and procedure should any young person go missing from the home; which is understood by staff.

Safeguarding training covers both child and adult modules and managers complete advanced safeguarding training. Safeguarding training is regularly updated. All safeguarding matters are managed promptly and efficiently and, where appropriate, external professionals and agencies are consulted. Internal systems are comprehensive and include discussions and meetings with the young person's social worker and other representatives of the local authority when risk assessments are reviewed and updated when appropriate. When necessary, the registered provider will review areas of practice and update procedures accordingly. This demonstrates that matters relating to young people's safety and well-being are acted upon and taken very seriously.

The company has an excellent and robust system of recruitment which exceeds current regulations. Recruitment is managed centrally although copies of personnel files are kept locally at each home. An electronic system has been set up that holds individual recruitment records for all staff. All new staff are thoroughly vetted and pre-employment checks are undertaken which ensures they are suitable to work with children. Checks additional to those required are carried out, such as ensuring the validity and existence of any company where an applicant has previously worked, with Companies House.

Young people are protected through the implementation of a range of personal and generic risk assessments. These address issues, such as young people's health needs, mobility impairment as well as environmental factors, such as young people's lack of knowledge around personal safety. The home ensures that a high percentage of young people receive close supervision 24 hours a day for reasons such as epilepsy and other disabilities.

There are systems in place regarding the maintenance and upkeep of the premises and the undertaking of health and safety checks. These include a robust system for communicating all works to be carried out and when these are completed. Records show that fire drills take place regularly and are appropriately recorded. Fire safety signs are clear and visible in the home and staff confirm that they have undertaken fire safety training.

Leadership and management

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

The home's Statement of Purpose is reviewed annually or when any major change takes place. It includes the staffing structure and details of the qualifications of the manager and staff. A children's guide has been developed for the home and meets the needs of the service.

At the time of the inspection the home did not have a Registered Manager for a very

short period of time due to the resignation of the previous manager. However the inspector was advised that interviews have taken place and that a highly experienced, qualified manager is due to commence within the next four weeks. In the absence of a Registered Manager, an experienced team leader is carrying out day-to-day management duties effectively with the support of the registered provider and other senior managers from the company.

One of the real strengths of the home is its induction and training programme which is extensive and shows a real commitment to staff by the company and registered provider. Some staff said one of the reasons they applied for a post at the home was that the company was well known for its training programme and its commitment and support to staff. The training covers such subjects as communication with children and autism, as well as all the mandatory training that is required. A very thorough programme of induction gives all staff the confidence and ability to care for young people.

Bank staff, as well as permanent staff complete the training programme. The majority of staff hold the level 3 Children and Young People's Workforce Diploma and arrangements are in place for staff who do not have such a qualification to undertake this training shortly.

Staff benefit from regular monthly supervision. This is monitored by senior management during the course of monthly visits to the home. Regular staff meetings are seen as important and provide a focal point to discuss any issues of concern.

Young people's care is monitored by internal and external audits and reports of these audits are consistent. The provider undertakes a six monthly report in line with the Regulations. The home has a development plan that includes the strengths and weakness of the service and shows how any developments are to be carried out.

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.