

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Clare Davies
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This residential short-break service caters for up to six children or young people at any one time. The service is provided by a national charity in partnership with a local authority and a primary care trust. Children and young people can therefore be provided with care and health packages. Most of the children and young people using the service have complex health needs, or are on the autistic spectrum and have associated challenging behaviour.

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**.

Children and young people receive high quality care and support from a dedicated staff team at this short break service. The enthusiasm and commitment from the staff contribute to this outstanding provision.

The quality of care is highly personalised and effective in providing a safe, healthy and stimulating environment. Children and young people enjoy the wide range of activities and experiences offered. They are secure in their surroundings, feel safe and consequently are happy. Children and young people are able to form good quality relationships with the staff who are creative in seeking young people's views through varied methods of communication. Staff have high aspirations for young people and are innovative in ensuring they have equal access to opportunities wherever possible, challenging barriers to disability.

The leadership and management of this home draw upon monitoring systems, the views of young people, their parents and professionals to raise standards and further improve practice. Parents and professionals are very satisfied with this service and welcome the willingness of the manager and team to adapt to meet individual needs.

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **outstanding**.

Outcomes for children and young people are outstanding. Parents and professionals

report high levels of satisfaction, with comments such as 'this is a well-regarded service, the staff are amazing and go more than the extra mile.' Children and young people have a planned transition into this service; this assists them in becoming familiar with the staff and the environment before their first overnight stay. Parents and carers are fully involved with the introduction and provide key information about their child's needs and routines. This ensures that children and young people are cared for according to their parents' wishes and that they receive continuity of care. Children and young people make excellent progress, through attending this short break service, in developing their personal and social skills. This contributes to them gaining in confidence and working towards a target in order that they can move on to the next goal. Children and young people are encouraged to become involved with their personal care. This supports them in managing some tasks independently, no matter how small. This may involve washing their hands or being able to make a snack.

The manager and staff are proactive with a positive attitude. This supports children and young people to benefit from full participation in the home, the community and wider society, as barriers faced by those who are disabled are challenged. Children and young people are supported to take part in local events and activities. The many photographs throughout the home show children and young people enjoying activities in the home and in the community. Some new experiences have included a train journey, making garden sculptures from willow and growing vegetables. A strength of this service is the extent to which children and young people are given choices and consulted about their short break experience. This ensures full participation and involves children and young people with decision making. The staff hold a breadth of communication skills to assist consultation, and they are resourceful and creative. In addition to day to day choices, children, young people and their families were consulted on the new garden and sensory room. Drawings and suggestions from children and their parents have now been incorporated into the recent projects. This enables children and young people to see that their contribution matters and can be acted upon.

Children and young people develop good relationships with the staff and low turnover within the team ensures that consistency of care is provided. This enables children and young people to feel safe and settled during their short break. Children and young people achieve excellent outcomes because of the commitment and determination of the staff team. The staff are very imaginative and proactive in finding ways to support young people with development relating to their health, education, social skills and behaviour.

Quality of care

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

The staff are patient and diligent in ensuring that children and young people are able to communicate their views and wishes to be active participants in the planning of their stay. One parent reported that initially their child was confused and unsure but now he helps to pack his case and is very happy to attend, signing that he likes it at this short break service.

The staff are ambitious for children and young people and display immense pride

and joy when talking about their achievements. When children or young people engage in new communication, or achieve a personal skill for the first time, there are big celebrations and congratulatory praise. This enables children and young people to develop their self-esteem and gain in confidence.

Children and young people receive high quality care from the staff team who place the well-being of individuals at the centre of their practice. This enables children and young people to make progress in many aspects of their lives. The staff promote the inclusion of those with disabilities; this ensures that children and young people have access to services and facilities as enjoyed by their peer group.

This service is commended by social care professionals for their flexibility and response to requests. The manager deploys the staff accordingly to maximise support available to children, young people and their families. This may involve some outreach support, adapting care packages and supporting the family as a whole. A social worker described the staff team as, 'attentive and calm, always respectful and sensitive, particularly to parents.'

There are sound systems for the management of medication. Qualified nurses within the team deliver the training regarding administration of medication and invasive care procedures to the care team. The nurses assess the competence of each staff member. This ensures that medication is administered safely and according to the instructions from medical practitioners. There is a clear audit trail of medication coming into and out of the service.

Some children and young people have complex health care needs that are managed very well by the staff. This supports parents and carers in knowing that their child is being cared for by competent, medically trained staff. A senior health care professional reports that the service has a fundamental understanding of a child's safety while meeting complex health needs.

This service has a wide range of resources on site to provide numerous purposeful and enjoyable activities. Children and young people enjoy the indoor jacuzzi, a specialist hydrotherapy pool. This provides some fun as well as benefits for those with physical disabilities. A newly refurbished sensory room enables children and young people to explore their senses in a relaxed environment with specialist lighting, music and equipment. Many children and young people enjoy the garden, a safe space to enjoy play equipment and other outdoor toys. A garden trail has raised flower borders providing plants to touch and smell and there are decorative displays catching the wind and light for sensory stimulation.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

The staff team are trained in safeguarding matters and team meetings promote regular updates. The staff demonstrate a robust understanding of the action to take if they have concerns about a child or young person's safety or well-being. The manager attends local safeguarding meetings where the focus is on the vulnerability of disabled children and young people. This level of participation in a multi-agency forum sharpens practice on safeguarding issues.

Parents report that they feel their children are safe throughout their short break stay. This is supported by staff knowledge of child protection and a physically safe

environment. The supervision provided by good staffing levels minimises the risk of young people going missing. Procedures are known by staff if this situation should arise. This ensures prompt action can be taken and liaison with the police is undertaken to secure the safety of any missing child or young person.

The staff are knowledgeable about the particular vulnerabilities of the children and young people and have a range of effective risk assessment documents to reduce known risks. This ensures young people can take part in activities within the home, and outside, with measures in place to keep them safe. For example, social stories and discussions have alerted children and young people to the dangers of crossing roads and regular evacuations of the property inform them what to do if they hear the fire alarm. Some young people are included in assessing risks prior to taking part in an activity. 'What do we need to worry about?' is an excellent tool engaging young people in risk management.

Behaviour support plans are comprehensive and individualised often incorporating advice from other professionals such as a speech and language therapist or the behaviour support team. This collaborative working ensures children and young people receive consistency whether they are at home, school or this short break service. This approach contributes to improved behaviour and progression in their personal development.

This organisation adopts a robust procedure to employ new staff following safer recruitment practices; this ensures children and young people are only cared for by adults that have been checked as suitable. There is a rigorous approach to health and safety matters, fire detection and prevention. This is underpinned by policies, procedures and training that alert staff to their roles and levels of responsibility. As a result, children and young people benefit from a safe environment and this has a positive impact on their welfare.

Leadership and management

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

Children and young people benefit from a service that is exceptionally well managed. The Registered Manager ensures that the home is well organised and staffed to provide children and young people with stability and consistency of care. This is evident from a stable staff team and the absence of agency staff employed.

The manager is keen to promote the service and strives for continual improvement. The staff are kept up-to-date with new legislation and practice developments. The manager ensures that the home fulfils its commitment to children and young people as laid out in the statement of purpose and children's guide.

Thoughtful attention is given to short break allocation, and considers staffing levels and skills to meet the needs of children and young people. Any capacity created through cancellation is used effectively by re-allocation, even at a few hours' notice. This flexible approach supports children, young people and their families to receive the maximum benefit from this short break service.

The manager ensures that annual surveys are undertaken to capture the views and opinions of parents about the service. The last survey concluded a high level of satisfaction from parents and this has been reinforced with comments made in this inspection.

Children and young people benefit from being looked after by staff who are supported through effective supervision, relevant training and productive team meetings. The manager and external managers understand the strengths and weaknesses of the home, learning from monitoring and inspection activities to improve practice. Professional development is encouraged as staff take on areas of responsibility and particular projects. The training matrix identifies skills and needs. This provides an overview of the collective team skills as well as individual professional development.

Social workers and parents report good working relationships with the staff and management of this home, where communication is regular and reliable. One social care professional specifically reports 'this is a fantastic resource. A strength of this service is how they are predominantly focused on the child's experience, not just having fun, but linked to good outcomes.' Another social worker commented on the 'can do attitude of the service', and staff report that they like being part of this organisation with their 'forward thinking approach.'

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.