

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Janet Hunnam
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This children's home is operated by the local authority. The service is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to seven young people with learning disabilities. It provides short break care and also longer term residential placements.

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**.

Young people receive outstanding levels of personalised care and support within a safe environment enabling them to flourish and make significant progress in their social skills, independence skills and personal development. Young people are happy and safe at the home; they develop trusting, positive relationships and build their confidence and self-esteem. This is achieved through the support of an experienced and skilful staff team, led by an effective Registered Manager with exceptional leadership abilities.

Care plans focus on the specific characteristics of each young person, recognising individual needs and identifying particular support strategies to assist young people in making progress and improving their life chances. Parents report 'It is a brilliant service'.

The Registered Manager and the staff team strive to continually improve the high standards of care through: a self-evaluative and forward thinking approach, and consultation with parents, carers, staff, young people and professionals. Rigorous monitoring is also undertaken to further develop the service and benefit young people.

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Highly individualised support enables young people to make significant progress in

developing their life and social skills. A parent commented that a young person has been 'completely different since going to the home and is much more sociable when they return home'. Another commented that a young person is 'more sociable, even talking more'. Trusting relationships with staff and staffs' continuous praise and celebration of young people's achievements in accomplishing their targets, allow young people to grow in confidence and develop self-esteem. Young people feel valued, respected and cared for.

Close attention to young people's health needs and effective liaison with health professionals ensure young people lead healthy lives. Staff manage complex medical conditions with sensitivity and seek specialist advice and guidance to achieve positive outcomes for young people. In small steps, young people are developing an understanding of healthy eating and a healthy lifestyle.

Educationally, young people have excellent attendance at school. Staff keep up to date with young people's progress and achievements through excellent communication systems and visits to schools. This ensures young people's developmental needs are fully met and effectively coordinated.

Young people participate in a wide range of activities within the home and the wider community. Activities in the community extend young people's social experiences and are a strength of the home in meeting young people's sensory needs, boosting their self-esteem and providing them with opportunities to choose what they would like to do. Staff report that through these activities young people flourish and they develop skills in appropriately interacting with their peers.

Outcomes relating to young people's independence and daily living skills are excellent. The emphasis is on young people doing as much as they can for themselves. Through small, achievable targets, young people develop skills in personal care such as being able to brush their teeth themselves from a starting point where they could not tolerate a toothbrush in their mouth. Some young people make their own breakfast each morning and participate in weekly independence evenings where they plan, shop and help prepare their evening meal and change their bed linen. Parents report that a young person has gained huge benefits from staying at the home and especially in working towards independence. Another commented that stays at the home are beneficial as the young person experiences another environment with their peers and familiar carers which aids their independence and prepares them for a future placement. Staff strive to maintain, and re-establish where appropriate, young people's contact with their families.

Quality of care

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

A highly experienced staff team provide consistently high quality, individualised care, which promotes progress for young people. A parent commented 'Fabulous staff provide consistency, structure and routine' and another commented 'Staff treat each young person as an individual.' Young people enjoy excellent relationships with staff

and a parent reports 'The young person loves it and can't wait to go' and another commented 'The young person loves going there.' Young people are relaxed and happy in an extremely caring and supportive environment enabling them to thrive and develop trust in the adults who care for them. Staff encourage young people to establish appropriate relationships with their peers. Young people are developing social skills to the extent that some can have fun with each other doing activities such as bowling in the community with minimum staff input.

A focus on identifying young people's specific needs and understanding each young person's character and personality is evident in outstanding care plans. 'All about Me' care plans are clear and provide a distinct picture of the young person as an individual, identifying their particular needs with detailed strategies for staff to care for them. Close liaison with parents, carers and social workers enable staff to understand and recognise the implications of young people's difficulties and make provision within daily care planning to facilitate their needs and personal development. Consequently, staff know young people very well and respond to their changing moods.

Staff use a variety of communication methods to interact with young people and ensure they have opportunities for putting their views forward and making choices. Young people choose their drinks and snacks and what activities they would like to do. An advocate attends the home weekly, spending time with young people to identify and communicate their needs and wants. The group consultation worker, specifically appointed to develop communication with young people and consult with them, is a valuable contribution to the culture of the home. This is extremely child centred, where young people's views are actively sought and highly valued by staff. Young people are thus developing an awareness that their views are important and respected which build their self-esteem and self-confidence.

Staff are continuously alert to young people's health needs. Some young people have complex medical needs and staff are vigilant and highly proactive in identifying emerging medical conditions. Staff liaise with health professionals ensuring that young people access the required medical and health professional input to achieve the best possible outcome. Young people's health needs are met to a particularly high standard. Staff implement all required health needs such as routine health appointments. The home identifies specific health needs prior to admission and staff receive specialist training prior to caring for a young person ensuring they have the skills and knowledge to provide competent, high quality care to young people with complex needs. Systems for the administration of medication are robust ensuring young people receive a high level of health care.

Young people enjoy a variety of healthy, nutritious meals, which fully encompass individual dietary requirements. Staff are aware of the eating routines of young people and ensure they receive safe, appropriate assistance at meal times. Staff encourage young people to participate in physical exercise. The outdoor gym equipment and new 'bird nest' swing enables young people to have fun and be active on site. Staff also encourage young people to participate in physical pursuits in the community and there is a real focus on extending young people's social experiences

in the wider community.

Activity programmes for holidays and weekends include a range of community-based activities with young people receiving full support from staff in accessing these activities. Staff are keen for young people to pursue their individual interests and try new things. Consequently, young people become more confident integrating into the community. A parent commented that a young person is more used to meeting other people, is more confident and will tolerate new places now. Young people have a choice of activities with art and craft being a particularly popular pastime. Staff are creative and keen to involve young people in vibrant, colourful wall displays of topical interests.

Staff are proactive in supporting young people's education. Key workers visit young people's schools to ensure that appropriate support is in place to assist their educational progress and maximise young people's potential. This ethos of ensuring young people receive all the support they need, extends to strong, effective partnerships with other professionals to meet the individual needs of young people.

Staff are attentive to the cultural needs of young people. Through the highly personalised care planning process, staff ensure that young people develop a sense of their personal identity and cultural background.

The home is comfortable and well maintained with bedrooms individually decorated and furnished. Staff encourage young people to personalise their bedrooms giving them a sense of identity and belonging. Communal rooms are spacious and there are areas for quiet relaxation and privacy for contact visits. The sensory room has up-to-date equipment to enhance young people's experiences by stimulating or calming their senses. Outdoor play areas are safe and secure.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people are protected from harm through high staff ratios, comprehensive risk assessments and highly individualised care plans. Parents comment that they 'never have any worries about young people's safety at the home' and 'they have no concerns at all about a young person going there; it is very safe'. Staff are consistently aware of the specific vulnerabilities of each young person and take appropriate action to protect them. Experienced and competent staff regularly receive safeguarding and child protection training ensuring they are constantly vigilant and take appropriate action to protect young people. A robust and comprehensive recruitment process is an integral part of an excellent culture of safety ensuring young people are cared for by suitable adults.

Behaviour management is highly personalised. Care plans identify potential challenging behaviour, triggers for such behaviour, safety and supervision needs and detailed identification of risk. Excellent control measures are outlined which staff

consistently apply resulting in skilled and proficient management of potentially difficult situations. Physical intervention is extremely rare with only one restraint occurring in the last 18 months, though staff receive regular training to deal with any such incident safely. Similarly, sanctions are not an established component of behaviour management and are infrequent. The staff team has a positive ethos of promoting positive behaviour and protecting young people. Young people do not leave the home without permission and staff closely supervise young people in line with their care plan if there is such a potential risk. Appropriate policies and procedures are in place to react swiftly to protect young people if such an incident occurred.

Excellent health and safety measures protect young people and staff from harm. All checks are up to date, and appropriate fire safety measures are in place. Audits and risk assessments are in place to monitor potential hazards and risk-reduction measures.

Leadership and management

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

The Registered Manager leads an extremely stable, experienced and committed staff team. She also manages another home operated by the council. Her leadership skills are outstanding resulting in effective and efficient management to sustain constant high quality care for young people. A professional reports 'She is an excellent manager who is really good at managing staff with an ability to think very clearly and rationally and with excellent communication skills.' The Registered Manager leads and motivates the staff team to continually improve the quality of care provided to impact positively on young people's lives. This is supported by well-established and dedicated senior care staff, A parent commented 'The home is an amazing, well-managed facility which we have the privilege of benefiting from - an excellent service.'

Meaningful consultation with parents, carers and staff enables management to improve the service provided. A system for more frequent newsletters for parents and carers is in place as a result of their feedback. The Registered Manager incorporates the results of the strengths and weakness of the service into a development plan, which outlines areas for improvement. These include: improving communication systems for young people with additional staff training in methods of communication, offering advice and guidance to parents and carers, improving the accessibility to community activities for young people and focusing on further developing young people's independence skills. This forward-looking approach results in continuous improvement. Recent developments include the installation of equipment in young people's bedrooms for them to listen to music, an increase in the number of staff trained to drive the home's vehicles resulting in improved access to community activities and more meaningful consultation with young people through the efforts of the consultation group worker.

No requirements or recommendations were made at the last inspection.

Monitoring of the service quality assurance systems are robust. Rigorous monthly monitoring encompasses all key areas of the service enabling managers to identify patterns and trends and rectify shortfalls without delay to sustain high quality care to secure young people's progress. An independent visitor undertakes regular monthly checks. Reports for these visits are comprehensive and make a valuable contribution to ensuring high quality care.

The home has a commitment to providing training and continuous professional development for staff. This ensures staff are confident and competent in caring for young people with complex needs. Staff are qualified to the required level, receive timely mandatory training supplemented by additional training planned in advance to extend their skills and knowledge and effectively support individual young people.

Staff report they receive regular supervision sessions and that management is approachable and available to provide informal guidance and advice as required. Regular staff meetings focus on the individual needs of young people, strategies, practices and new ways of working to promote their progress and development. Consequently, staff state they feel very well supported, receive good quality training and are equipped to provide a high quality service with young people receiving excellent care.

Records are clear, up to date and contribute to an excellent understanding of a young person's life, their individual needs and progress made. Parents and carers are fully involved in the care planning process ensuring an open and inclusive approach. Parents report 'It is easy to talk to staff and they are very helpful' and 'Staff are very accommodating' particularly regarding the timing of short-breaks to fully support parents and carers.' Significant events are notified to the relevant authorities and procedures diligently followed.

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 children's homes.