

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Janet Hunnam
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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

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.

Overall effectiveness

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

The home provides a highly effective service impacting positively on young people's lives. Young people receive a high standard of care and individualised support from a committed and caring staff team resulting in significant progress for them.

Exceptional management robustly monitors and reviews practice to maintain an excellent quality of care and improve outcomes for the young people. The Registered Manager identifies strengths and weaknesses; development plans comprehensively ensure continuous improvement. Robust safeguarding procedures and practice are consistently applied. Staff understand these practices and keep young people safe.

The staff team is dedicated to developing each young person's life skills and to providing support to help them achieve their potential. Young people thrive through their positive relationships with the staff.

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people are flourishing and making exceptional progress. A parent said their child is completely different since having short breaks at the home and is making substantial progress. The young people are acquiring life skills and have opportunities to make choices. This enables young people to develop their self-esteem within a supportive and nurturing environment. The progress the young people make enables them to be more sociable in their family environment.

Young people's health needs are met to a high level. In small steps, they are taking responsibility for their own health and developing an understanding of a healthy lifestyle. They benefit from comprehensive, individualised healthcare focused on their specific needs. Young people take part in a wide range of purposeful activities both within the home and in the local community, extending their experiences to develop their potential. Young people who are resident full-time at the home have excellent attendance at school. Staff liaise closely with school resulting in the young people making significant progress.

Quality of care

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

Young people have relaxed and friendly relationships with staff who have high aspirations for them and focus on their specific individual needs. Staff provide opportunities for young people to develop their skills. Staff spend time listening, communicating with and responding to the young people. This enables young people to build trust, develop self-esteem and be confident that the staff are consistently concerned about their welfare. Constructive peer relationships are encouraged by organising short breaks so that young people who have made friends with each other can stay at the same time, whenever possible. Young people become more sociable within the home and also in their family environment.

Staff actively seek out the views of the young people in a range of creative ways to ensure they can make choices and communicate their wishes and feelings. A comprehensive system of pictures is in place to aid communication and to allow young people to choose what they would like to do. Managers consult with young people through surveys. These are presented to young people in an appropriate format and were effectively used to consult them about new play equipment. An independent advocate visits the home on different days each week to consult with the young people and ensure their views are communicated. Staff liaise proactively with the young people's families to find out their likes and dislikes and the staff team implements the young people's wishes. The young person's guide has full details of the complaints procedure so that they know who to go to for help when they are not happy about something.

The care plans for each young person are of exceptional high quality. They are clear and detailed and include photographs demonstrating the progress each young person is making. Each plan comprehensively identifies their personal needs and the support each young person requires. As a result each young person receives personalised care that promotes all aspects of their individual needs and identity. Staff review each young person's targets regularly, involving the parents fully in this process and the young people according to their level of understanding. Staff are innovative and creative in devising strategies to develop the young people's communication skills and support them to achieve their potential.

Young people live in a healthy environment which actively promotes their physical and emotional well-being. They have good quality, healthy meals with plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables. The menu is on display in picture form and caters for young people's individual needs. Physical activity is encouraged and young people have access to new outdoor gym equipment and play equipment.

Young people have access to specialist services to support their health needs. Staff are trained by a paediatric nurse to meet the specific health needs of young people before they are placed. Staff also liaise frequently with health professionals. A rigorous system for recording and administering medication is in place including training for all staff. Managers closely monitor the records for the administration of

medication, ensuring that all arrangements for dealing with medication are safe and effective.

Staff frequently liaise with school staff regarding the specific needs of young people and to share successful strategies to help them make progress. Young people are encouraged to take part in purposeful, enjoyable activities in the home and in the community. Activities such as indoor games, arts and crafts, cookery, and music sessions are available in the home. Staff also arrange trips outside the home to further young people's experiences and develop their skills. Staff aim to expand the abilities of the young people by providing challenges through new experiences. The art and craft work is stimulating for the young people and the displays are bright and colourful.

Young people benefit from a high standard of facilities. The home has recently been refurbished to a high level and though the rooms are quite large, they have a homely feel. The bedrooms have been individualised and some have bright, creative displays painted on the walls while others are less stimulating to meet differing needs of the young people. Furnishings are of high quality. The sensory room has up-to-date equipment to enhance young people's experiences by stimulating or calming their senses. The external areas are secure and provide pleasant outdoor play and activity spaces. The home has areas for quiet relaxation and privacy for contact visits. A new alarm system is in place. The bathrooms are well equipped and suitable for the needs of the young people.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Safeguarding young people is a priority. Young people's welfare is very important and central to practice. Staff are constantly alert to young people's moods and feelings and are vigilant in monitoring them to ensure young people's safety. Staff use a variety of communication methods to explore young people's anxieties. Young people benefit from a staff group who are trained and confident in handling child protection concerns or allegations and immediately refer any concerns to managers who take appropriate action to ensure the young people's safety. Young people are relaxed and happy in the presence of staff. All young people have a responsible adult who can advocate on their behalf and also an independent advocate visits the home and consults with them. Staff are extremely proactive in identifying the specific vulnerabilities and individual needs of young people and take appropriate action to protect them.

Clear and comprehensive risk assessments are in place to identify and minimise risks. Staff consistently protect young people from going missing. Bullying is not an issue at the home as staff closely monitor the young people. Positive and proactive individual behaviour management strategies are consistently applied. This results in the extremely rare use of physical intervention and sanctions.

Robust recruitment procedures are in place with all required pre-employment checks carried out to protect the young people from unsuitable adults. The home has been refurbished to a high standard, is well maintained and does not pose any identified safety risks. All checks are up to date and appropriate fire safety measures are in place. Staff appropriately monitor visitors to the home to ensure only suitable and agreed people gain access. All safeguarding practices are rigorously monitored by the Registered Manager resulting in the young people having a strong sense of safety and well-being.

Leadership and management

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

The home is efficiently and effectively managed. The experienced Registered Manager and her deputy provide excellent leadership; senior managers from within the organisation also provide active support. A development plan is in place demonstrating the home's capacity for continuing improvement. The development plan is displayed prominently in the home. It is provided in an accessible symbol format so young people are kept informed about what improvements are being made.

Improvement is central to practice at the home. This is achieved through identifying strengths and weaknesses and setting targets for the implementation of strategies to address weaknesses. Consequently there is significant improvement in areas such as communication resources, young people's care plans and transport. The home has recently been awarded 'Autism Accreditation' which also demonstrates achievement in developing improved outcomes for young people.

The home is working within its Statement of Purpose which, together with the young person's guide, is clear about the home's aims and objectives and what it provides for young people. A guide for parents and carers is also available.

Comprehensive, robust and regular monitoring of the home's operation ensures that a high quality of care continues to meet young people's needs. Reports of monitoring visits are extensive and thorough; these are a tool of the quality assurance system through which the Registered Manager delivers continuing improvement.

A very enthusiastic and motivated staff team care for the young people. They have a wide range of skills and experience. There are sufficient staff and the number of staff is adjusted according to the differing needs of the young people. Staff receive comprehensive training and it is organised so that the staff team are trained together to ensure a consistency of approach. Staff are well supported through regular, relevant and reflective supervision which focuses on individual learning and development and improving young people's outcomes. Annual staff appraisals link targets for individual staff with targets for improvement in the home's development plan. Staff are eager and enthusiastic to improve the quality of care provided and the outcomes for young people.

Record keeping is a key strength. Records are clear, up to date and stored securely. The care plan in particular contributes to a thorough understanding of the young person's life, their individual needs and progress made.

Equality and diversity practice is **outstanding**.