

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 eight young people with learning disabilities and physical disabilities. It provides short break care and some 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 thrive in a safe, caring environment where they receive outstanding levels of care, support and guidance from a dedicated and committed staff team. Exceptional levels of individualised care enable young people to make significant progress in their behaviour, communication, independence skills and personal development.

The home is proactive in seeking young people's views, opinions and preferences and involving them in the care they receive. Care plans focus on the individuality of young people and involve them in the process as much as possible. A professional commented that young people are given, 'The dignity and respect they deserve and are accepted for their differences.'

Sensitive and supportive relationships between staff and young people underpin a culture of safety. Staff are aware of young people's specific vulnerabilities and have strategies in place to manage their behaviour, minimise the risk of harm and encourage young people to behave appropriately and develop coping strategies.

The Registered Manager strives to maintain excellent quality of care through robust monitoring procedures and continuously develop new initiatives to provide opportunities for young people to make progress and improve their future life chances.

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Highly individualised, consistent support enables young people to develop trusting relationships with staff, which build their confidence and sense of safety and security. A parent commented that being at the home is, 'A fantastic experience' for the young person; they have, 'Grown and matured in a safe and happy environment.' Young people have opportunities to make choices and develop their skills and understanding. Staff receive training in the various methods of communication used by young people enabling them to share their views and preferences. As young people's confidence and trust develops, their verbal communication skills improve enormously.

Young people are making excellent progress, notably from their starting points at the time of admission. Over time, young people's behaviour significantly improves enabling them to access community facilities and attend school. Young people make huge progress in levels of independence skills enabling them to take more responsibility for themselves. One night a week is 'independence night' when young people help to plan, shop and cook the evening meal. Staff support young people to develop skills to attend to their own personal care and hygiene. Young people respond extremely positively to a reward system for meeting their own specific targets. Young people have progressed to the point where some are making their own breakfast. A parent commented that the young person, 'Loves being there and has been more independent.'

Close monitoring and thorough attention by staff to each young person's health needs, ensure they meet all their health requirements. Excellent communication with health professionals enables staff to resolve individual health concerns with positive outcomes. In small steps, young people are developing an understanding of healthy eating and a healthy lifestyle. Intense and patient support enables young people to manage their frustrations and gradually develop coping strategies.

All young people attend school, show excellent attendance and are making considerable progress. Close liaison and communication between the home and school ensures young people's developmental needs are coordinated and met. Young people participate in a wide range of activities and they have individual activity timetables. They are extending their social experiences by going on train and bus rides, to cafes and restaurants, shopping, bowling, football matches and other activities increasing their integration into the community. High quality contact with their families benefits young people. Staff facilitate and support this contact enabling young people to maintain and improve family relationships

Staff encourage young people to develop independence skills and are committed to young people doing as much as they can for themselves in relation to daily living tasks. Well thought out programmes devised by staff, plan for young people moving on to other placements. Staff consider transitions sensitively ensuring that young people are prepared in a way and at a time that they are able to cope with. Working closely with professionals and families, staff advocate for the young person ensuring

the change is as smooth and positive as possible.

Quality of care

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

Young people enjoy excellent relationships with staff in a nurturing, caring and supportive environment. Extremely committed staff have high aspirations for young people who have complex, often challenging needs and value them as individuals. Interaction is positive and appropriate with staff providing guidance and support while respecting young people's individual choices and wishes. Young people enjoy their relationships with staff who are responsive to each young person. This gives young people confidence to trust staff and they enjoy the friendly and relaxed atmosphere in the home. A parent commented, 'My son is very happy at the home. All the staff are really friendly and approachable. He could not be in a better place at this time. They know him very well and know how to deal with him. I feel very confident to leave my son in their care.' Another parent commented, 'You can see that the staff really care about the children they look after.'

The home is extremely child-centred. Staff know each young person as an individual and recognise and respond to their changing moods and ways of communication. Though communicating their views, wishes and feelings is difficult, staff actively try to find out what is causing a young person to be unhappy. Staff successfully use a variety of communication methods to enable young people to impart their wants and needs. An advocate attends the home weekly and interacts with young people as an alternative means of raising any concerns they may have. Staff sensitively and patiently explain to young people, using individual communication methods, why it is not possible to act upon their wishes. Young people consequently feel valued and respected. A parent commented, 'I am always very impressed how well the staff respect my son's privacy and well-being.'

'All About Me' care plans are clear, straightforward and written from the perspective of the young person. They give an exceptional account of the child's individual needs, their preferred communication methods, how they express their feelings and personal care routines. In addition, they contain comprehensive risk assessments linked directly to their care plan with specific targets for staff to support them to make progress in their personal development. Young people respond, within their capabilities, to a reward system for working towards their targets. As a result, young people receive extremely individualistic and personalised care to meet their needs.

Young people live in an environment that actively supports their physical and psychological well-being. They enjoy healthy meals and have opportunities for exercise. Young people enjoy the well-equipped outdoor play area, and also have opportunities for exercise in the community such as walking and play parks. Staff pay particularly close attention to the health needs of young people through close monitoring and effective liaison with young people's families. Consequently, they have access to the services and support they require to meet all their health needs. Staff respond directly to young people's health requirements and involve specialist

health professionals whenever necessary. Specific training in relation to individual medical conditions and training in the administration of medication ensures staff provide a high level of health care.

Staff are proactive in supporting young people to attend school and achieve educationally to their full potential. Key workers liaise closely with teaching staff and keep up to date with their progress and achievement ensuring that young people's developmental needs are coordinated and appropriate strategies are in place to support fully their educational progress.

Activity programmes for weekends and holidays are a real strength of the home. Thoughtful forward planning provides opportunities for young people to extend their social experiences and gain confidence in the community. Staff recognise young people's specific interests and arrange activities and trips out to foster their particular leisure pursuits. Young people receive full support from staff in accessing activities and integrating in the community. Within the home, young people choose what they would like to do to relax. A wide range of games, music and pastimes are available for young people to enjoy and have fun. A parent commented that their child has, 'Tried new activities and been able to explore and grow.'

The home is comfortable, spacious and well maintained with a continuous focus on the safety of young people. There is a commitment to providing a pleasant living environment that is as homely as possible. Re-decoration is taking place and changes to the use of rooms to provide additional computer facilities for young people. Young people personalise their bedrooms giving them a sense of identity and belonging.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

A culture of safety protects young people. Staff are vigilant and aware of the vulnerabilities of young people. High staff ratios, comprehensive risk assessments and individualised care planning protect young people from harm. Staff are exceedingly attentive in recognising signs of potentially unsafe behaviour and adept at using approaches to minimise risk and protect young people and staff. Parents and professionals report that young people are safe at the home stating that young people, 'Feel safe and secure in the environment.' A parent commented, 'We know our child is safe and happy and being given boundaries and trying new experiences.' Young people appear relaxed, content and enjoying their time with staff. Staff are competent and trained in child protection and safeguarding procedures and have an excellent understanding of the action they would take should there be any suspicion of harm. Young people do not leave the home without permission but procedures are in place if such an incident occurred.

Staff tailor behaviour management to each young person's needs and clearly outline their safety and supervision needs in their care plan. Staff access the expertise of a behaviour support specialist for advice and guidance on managing the behaviour of

individual young people. Restraint is extremely rare and staff use the principle that if restraint is necessary then they must be doing something wrong. Staff have an excellent understanding of the triggers and signs of negative behaviour. They take action to prevent potentially challenging behaviour escalating and deal with difficult situations calmly and supportively.

A robust system of recruitment is in place, which includes feedback from young people relating to potential members of staff. Thorough and comprehensive checks ensure suitable staff care for young people.

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

Leadership and management

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

The Registered Manager manages two homes and is highly effective. She provides excellent leadership to a staff team that is experienced, stable and committed to providing high quality care to secure positive outcomes for young people. The Registered Manager's support is highly valued by staff. Staff report that she is available, approachable and has introduced improvements to the benefit of young people. Professionals report that 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' to ensure the highest quality of care is provided for each young person. An experienced deputy manager assists the Registered Manager to lead the staff team in striving for continuous improvement. Regular staff meetings have 'golden moments' giving recognition to staff who have done something exceptionally well. The needs of young people are central to practice, planning and development with all decisions focusing on their well-being and best interests.

The Registered Manager clearly identifies the strengths and weaknesses of the home on a regular basis. Feedback and consultation questionnaires from staff, parents and carers contribute to the process of assessing the home's performance, identifying weaknesses and providing information for development of the service. This self-evaluative, forward-looking approach results in continuous improvement. Developments since the last inspection include strengthening the system for meaningful consultation with young people through the appointment of a Consultation Group Worker, further enhancements to care plans and risk assessments with greater involvement of parents and carers in this process to ensure staff have all relevant information relating to individual young people. The development plan focuses on improving communication systems for young people, providing opportunities for young people to achieve as much independence as possible and supporting and consulting families. No requirements or recommendations were made at the last inspection.

There is a robust monitoring system in place. This system includes monthly checks of

all key areas of service provision, highlighting any issues or areas for improvement. An independent visitor undertakes regular monthly checks resulting in detailed and comprehensive reports that are part of the rigorous, on-going quality assurance programme.

An enthusiastic and motivated staff team, within an open, supportive culture, is committed to providing consistently high quality care for young people to improve their life chances. Staff report they receive excellent support, regular supervision and relevant, well-planned training. Managers give informal support, guidance and encouragement consistently to staff. All staff hold the required qualification or are undertaking the award. Managers fully support staff to achieve the award by designating time for them to complete the necessary training and study. In addition, staff receive training throughout the year to enhance and inform their care practice. Managers adjust staffing levels appropriately to meet the needs of young people. Agency staff provide additional support when required for individual young people but the same agency staff provide care whenever possible to ensure continuity of care, enhancing young people's sense of safety and security.

Records kept at the home are clear and professional, helping to contribute to the picture of young people's lives. Photographs of young people participating in activities are a positive addition to these documents. All significant events relating to the protection of young people 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.