

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Clare Davies
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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 service offers short breaks for up to eight children and young people of either sex between the ages of five and seventeen who have a severe learning and physical disability and/or complex health needs. Generally, short breaks are offered to families twice a month; this can vary according to individual needs.

The property is located in a residential area on the edge of a market town within walking distance from shops and community facilities. This service is provided by a local authority and is available to families from across the county.

Overall effectiveness

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

Children and young people with disabilities and complex health needs benefit from outstanding levels of care and support from this short break service. Aspirations are high, regardless of disability, and the committed staff team provide an exceptional level of well-planned and highly-individualised care. The views of children, young people and their families are taken into account in the running of the service and there are many opportunities to integrate with community events and activities.

Children and young people enjoy the range of activities available to them on site and in the community. Staff celebrate individual progress and development, no matter how small, and support children and young people to achieve to their maximum potential. Parents feel included in the plans for their children and express high levels of satisfaction with this service. Social workers report how this service liaises very effectively with other agencies and is flexible in supporting families whilst providing a high quality service.

Staff are trained and supported in their roles and their enthusiasm is evident. The leadership and management of this home include rigorous monitoring systems and it continually strives to develop the service to further improve the outcomes for children and young people.

Areas for improvement

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Children and young people enjoy their short breaks at this service. This is evident from observing their reactions to the members of staff, the environment, and taking part in activities. Relatives and social workers report very high levels of satisfaction

and can identify how this provision enhances the lives of the children and young people and their families too. The staff team have high expectations and provide encouragement for children and young people to reach their potential. Any level of progress is celebrated; consequently the children and young people respond well to staff and develop a positive view of themselves and their personal achievements.

A healthy diet is provided, taking into account personal preferences and dietary needs. Some children and young people have a soft diet and are assisted with eating. There is a commitment to ensure everyone is included and treated equally. Mealtimes are planned as a family occasion around the table with staff where social skills and independence are promoted. Cooks are employed to provide a main meal each day with cakes and snacks. There is a second kitchen suitable for children and young people to use, with supervision, where they make snacks independently and do cooking as an activity.

Children and young people are cared for by an extremely competent staff who are trained to administer medication and medical procedures. Parents consent to medical protocols ensuring that their children are cared for according to their wishes. Children and young people receive high levels of personal care from trained staff who respect their privacy and dignity. Young people are supported in understanding and coping with the changes to their body associated with puberty.

Staff are trained in the use of sign language and the use of symbols or picture exchange communication system known as PECS. Many children and young people are reassured of what will happen during their stay by using visual aids and a sequence of events. Throughout their stay children and young people are supported in referring to their schedule to understand what will happen next. This reduces any anxieties and supports them in feeling more secure in their placement and, therefore, able to enjoy themselves.

Children and young people enjoy an excellent variety of facilities on site and they are supported in accessing community resources too. Staff ensure that children and young people are integrated into the local community through using the cinema, swimming pool, a mainstream youth club, a bowling alley and attendance at local events, such as fetes and carnivals. A minibus with a wheelchair lift and a people carrier are available to the service at all times, staff are suitably assessed as competent drivers. A platform swing in the garden enables wheelchair users to enjoy this activity and the recent installation of a hot tub in a log cabin provides water play and hydrotherapy.

Young people are supported to achieve some independent skills whilst working towards transition to adult services. Goals worked towards may be loading and programming a washing machine, household tasks, growing produce, preparing snacks and money management.

Quality of care

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

The composition of the staff team provides a good mix of gender, age and experience. Extremely positive and constructive relationships are formed with the children and young people where the consistency of care is a priority. Staff are allocated the care and responsibility of specific children and young people each day. Staff are supported by each other to have suitable breaks when there are pressures of providing one-to-one supervision over an extended period of time.

Although there are challenges with some children and young people's levels of communication, there are creative and personalised ways to ensure that children and young people contribute to the running of the service. They are involved with decision making and choices with regards to: the meals; activities; colour choices of bedding; and clothing. This service ensures that an advocate from an independent organisation visits every week and, should the need arise, there are picture and symbol versions of a complaints procedure. Parents are given details of the complaints procedure during the introduction period.

There are extremely sound systems for the management of medication. Medical practitioners deliver training to the staff team and assess their competence. 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 the knowledge that their child is being cared for by competent, medically trained staff. Social workers report that the staff team contribute very effectively to a multi-agency approach in supporting children, young people and their families.

Personalised care plans are agreed by parents and where appropriate, other professionals. Simple plans are produced for children and young people with good use of photographs and colour. These plans list 'How best to support me', 'What is important to me' and 'what people like and admire about me'. Care plans detail the holistic approach of meeting medical, physical, social and emotional needs of the children and young people. Methods of communication are clearly identified and the staff team have access to computer programmes to print symbols, pictures and photographs to create schedules and visual aids.

This is a proactive service that strives to find solutions in order to support the children and young people; this invariably leads to supporting their families. Some children have experienced sleep trials where staff have observed them sleeping at the short break service and in their own home. Routines and improved sleep patterns have been transferred into the home and enabled parents to re-establish a consistent night time routine.

This service has a fantastic range of resources on site to provide numerous purposeful and enjoyable activities. Sensory rooms enable children and young people to explore their senses in a relaxed environment with specialist lighting, music and equipment. In addition to toys and books there are computers, DVDs and musical instruments. The garden provides a safe space to enjoy and to use swings, a trampoline, tricycles and other outdoor toys. An extended garden provides an

adventure trail into a woodland with musical instruments, a play house and raised borders for growing vegetables.

This service is located in an old building that provides character. Children and young people with physical disabilities can experience going upstairs to bed with the support of a lift. The barriers posed by an old building do not deny children and young people access to most areas of the home. The decoration and furniture create a very warm welcoming environment with mobility equipment stored away when not in use. Overhead tracking installed in two bathrooms assists in delivering personal care. The third bathroom is domestic in style and available for those that do not require specialist equipment. The building is divided into two areas providing space to have smaller groups of four. Each side of the house has a lounge, dining room, soft play and sensory room. All single bedrooms are on the first floor. Waking night staff are available throughout the night with the support of staff sleeping on the premises if required to assist.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Children and young people are cared for in a physically safe environment. Matters of health and safety are given extremely close attention by staff supported by robust policies and procedures from the local authority. Detailed risk assessments identify potential hazards and how they can be eliminated and reduced. These are in place for activities, equipment, the building, children and young people. There has been a recent audit of fire safety and procedures are in place for emergency evacuation using sleighs from the first floor and other special equipment.

Good staffing levels ensure high levels of supervision and minimise the opportunity for children and young people to go missing. Should this event occur, there are clear procedures to follow including liaison with the police for assistance. The security of the home also reduces the opportunity for children and young people to wander off. Secure doors and gates can be readily opened by the staff; this creates a more homely environment without excessive locks and keys.

Behaviour support plans assist staff in providing a consistent response to behaviour with the emphasis on distraction. Staff are trained in the safe handling of challenging behaviour and any physical intervention is recorded in detail. Children and young people respond well to the consistency of the staff team. Formal meetings promote the use of the same behaviour management techniques used in the family home and school. Where appropriate, sanctions are occasionally used, such as removal from the group due to shouting or throwing things.

Staff are extremely knowledgeable about the particular vulnerabilities of the children and young people who use this service and their care needs are documented within their care plans. Staff receive regular training in safeguarding and, as a result, they demonstrate an excellent understanding of the action to take should they have

concerns about a child's safety or well-being. The local authority adopts a robust procedure to employ new staff following safer recruitment practices. All visitors to the home are required to provide evidence of their identity and sign the visitors book. These systems help to protect children and young people as they ensure that unauthorised individuals are not able to gain access to the home.

Leadership and management

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

Children and young people benefit from this short break service which is managed extremely well with effective leadership. The Registered Manager ensures the service is very well organised and staffed to ensure that children and young people receive excellent stability and consistency of care. The manager regularly consults with the children, young people and their families through face to face contact and surveys. This level of monitoring ensures the manager has a grasp of the strengths of the service and any areas to improve upon. This service is very proactive in engaging and collaborating with other professionals and agencies in order to support children and young people with their special needs.

This short break provision is very well resourced to ensure children and young people have good staffing ratios, access to purposeful activities and leisure interests, and a very pleasant homely environment that is suitably equipped. The service strives to improve what it can offer and has recently installed a hot tub and created an additional room on the ground floor. The manager ensures that the service develops relationships with neighbouring children and their families by inviting them to events, such as an egg hunt in the grounds. This helps raise awareness of children and young people with special needs and fosters good relationships within the community.

The manager aspires to maintain high standards and she supports and motivates the staff team to achieve this. Staff members are enthusiastic about their work and feel supported through regular supervision, good training opportunities and clear policies and procedures to guide them. Records are made to detail any concerns and progress and reports are regularly shared with parents and professionals. The manager ensures there is effective monitoring of such records and other aspects of the service. Additional monitoring is undertaken by a representative from the local authority through monthly visits, often accompanied by an elected member. This promotes awareness of corporate responsibility for children and young people with special needs.

Equality and diversity practice is **outstanding**.