

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Trevor Hall
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This home is operated by a local authority. The home is registered as a children's home for up to six young people at any one time. The service offers short break care only for children and young people with severe learning and/or physical disabilities. It is only open at weekends, or for short periods during the summer holidays.

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 **good**.

Young people experience outstanding levels of care and support when accessing this service. The quality of the care offered is outstanding. Young people are treated with respect and dignity, and are central to all care planning and decisions that affect their lives. Parents, social workers and other stakeholders comment on the significant improvements and outcomes achieved by young people at this setting. Young people are offered a fantastic opportunity to develop social skills and personal development in a safe nurturing environment.

Young people's needs and views are central to the running of the home. Staff actively encourage young people to express themselves, to make choices and to enjoy a full range of social opportunities and experiences. All aspects of care planning and practice are highly personalised. It is tailored to comprehensively meet the individual needs of each young person.

Staff are highly committed and demonstrate a high level of skill and understanding which enables them to meet the young people's complex needs on a daily basis. Staff have high aspirations for all young people and work strenuously to promote young people's personal growth, and social and emotional development. The home's management has changed since its last inspection and currently no Registered Manager is in post. Whilst exceptionally good interim management arrangements have been put in place and the effects of not having a Registered Manager in post has been minimal on the young people's experience and care, the home can only be judged as adequate in this area.

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **outstanding**.

Young people receiving respite care in this home are cared for in line with their individual needs as identified in their care/short break care plan. The quality of care and support provided is outstanding. Extremely caring, motivated and knowledgeable staff enable young people to maximise their individual potential. Young people are assisted to participate in a range of consultations and group initiatives such as the children's forum, which enables them to actively contribute to the way their diverse needs are met. Parents, schools, health professionals and the short break service work well together, in helping young people with complex learning and physical disabilities achieve in all aspects of their lives. Relationships between staff and young people are excellent. Staff treat each young person with respect and dignity and it is clear that young people enjoy their respite care experience.

Young people receive high levels of personalised care in a warm and nurturing environment. There is a friendly and good natured atmosphere which young people find reassuring and supportive. Communication with young people is a key strength in this service. Staff work creatively and resourcefully identifying those methods that best meet individual needs. A local social work team produce in-depth core assessments on all children and young people accessing this service, which clearly identifies young people's specific needs. Young people clearly benefit from a high level of continuity and support between their family, education placement and the centre, enabling individual care needs and agreed targets to be met and often exceeded. Young people thrive and develop high levels of self-esteem, social identity and independence, within their levels of understanding and ability. Individual and group activities are both stimulating and life enhancing, helping young people to grow in confidence and self-reliance.

Specific and measurable targets are set for all young people with regular reviews. These targets identify areas in a young person's life which are achievable, and will greatly enhance their future independence and support needs. Young people play an active role in their transition plans communicating their views at all stages. This creates a culture that is fully committed to comprehensively meeting the young people's complex learning and physical disabilities.

Primary health care remains the responsibility of parents and carers as the home only offers short-term respite care. Medication accompanies young people into the home at the start of each period of respite care. Excellent procedures, staff training and very clear record maintenance, ensure correct management of all medication and protect young people's safety. All staff as part of their core training undertake a basic first aid and medication administration course; many have received specific training related to managing epilepsy and diabetes.

Young people attend educational placements suitable to their individual learning and health needs. Parents facilitate attendance and the home liaises consistently with all

education providers, ensuring that communication is current and robust, and contributions are efficiently made to all care planning arrangements.

Quality of care

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

Staff provide an outstanding level of care to the young people ensuring that they have a pleasant and rewarding experience whilst in respite. Young people clearly benefit from a competent and able staff team who genuinely care about the young people in the home. Parents and social workers confirmed that young people's well-being is central to the practice in the home and that a very high standard of personal care is provided.

Young people's health is effectively safeguarded because there are clear policies and procedures that are consistently applied by a very well trained staff team. Staff are vigilant in checking medication dispensed. This ensures accurate and up-to-date records, which evidence safe practice. Care planning and risk assessment are also excellent, which ensures that staff have good up-to-date information about the young people in their care. The staff group provides the right balance between nurturing and enabling young people to develop appropriate self-reliance. Young people have their individual cultural, religious, language and racial needs affectively identified and addressed.

Care staff are very knowledgeable about each young person's particular needs as well as their individual preferences and interests. This helps young people to settle quickly on each respite episode and elevates separation anxieties, for both the young people and their carers. Young people enjoy very positive relationships with staff and other young people. This enables them to enjoy a wide variety of social experiences and interactions that are beyond their normal experience. These positive relationships enable young people to feel safe in their care and help them to improve their self-image and build up emotional resilience.

Staff receive high levels of training in a variety of communication techniques and systems, enabling them to involve the young people in their care and to enable them to understand each child's needs. Individual placement plans are very detailed and specific to each young person. Staff, therefore, are aware of the diverse needs of the young people and ensure that they are consistently met.

Parents confirm that they are informed of the home's complaints system prior to the young person's first stay in the home. Details of how to raise issues of concern or make complaint are also included in the parents and young people's guide. Proper investigation and satisfactory resolution of all complaints, ensures that parents have confidence in the home's complaints procedures. No complaints have been made about this service since it was last inspected.

Young people live in a bright, modern purpose-built home which provides sufficient space to meet their needs. The home is decorated to a high standard and young

people have good quality furniture in their bedrooms and ample storage for personal clothes and belongings. The home enjoys good links to local facilities and has access to suitably adapted vehicles which means that young people have convenient and safe transport for activities.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people are safe, valued and respected at this home. Regular training provides staff with up-to-date knowledge of current safeguarding procedures and gives them the confidence to make referrals when procedures dictate that they should. The home has made a number of safeguarding referrals since the last inspection; all were appropriate and all were appropriately and necessary to promote the welfare of individual young people.

Risk assessments are in place for each young person that covers behaviour management, the environment and activities. These clearly identify all potential risks, and effective strategies are in place to minimise these risks. Young people's individual behaviour management plans give clear guidance to staff about managing harmful/anti-social behaviours. Staff have an appropriate awareness of bullying behaviour and the home has appropriate policies in this respect. Bullying is not an issue in this setting. Procedures for the reception, storage, administration and recording of medication in the home are very good and meet all requirements and good practice guidance.

Staff are very clear about their responsibility to protect young people and provide a safe living environment. The inclusive caring culture of the home ensures that young people are respected as individuals. The careful selection, recruitment and retention of staff helps young people feel secure and to have a consistent team of staff that know them well.

The use of methods of control is fair and realistic and is limited to assisting young people to stay safe. Physical intervention by staff is infrequent and is limited to ensuring that young people do not harm either themselves or others. Interventions are usually limited to staff safely guiding young people away from areas of high risk or from harmful situations.

The environment is physically safe and appropriately secure, taking account of the needs and characteristics of the young people cared for at the home. Fire safety is effective and well planned. Drills are regular with young people and staff are all aware of the safe evacuation procedures. Periodic checks on fire alarms and portable fire fighting equipment are completed to the timescales set by the home's policies and regulations. The fire risk assessment is updated annually.

Leadership and management

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

Since this home was last inspected, the Registered Manager has left and a senior staff member has been covering as interim manager whilst a new manager is recruited. The interim manager is a very experienced residential care manager who has previously gone through the Ofsted's suitability process and has run outstanding services. The interim manager is appropriately qualified and has many years of experience of residential care with this client group.

Staff and social workers canvassed are fulsome in their praise for the interim managers, commitment, drive and dedication. One worker stated 'despite being rated as outstanding at our last inspection the home's management has actually improved since the change, things are much more systematic and clear, our interim manager knows what she wants and communicates very effectively.' All staff members comment positively about the interim manager's commitment, child-centred approach and staff support. Clear lines of accountability in the home have enabled a stable, consistent, safe and nurturing environment to be maintained. The home keeps sufficient staff on duty at all times to meet the young people's identified needs.

The provision of a Registered Manager is, however, a regulatory requirement and despite the excellent interim arrangements there is a need to appoint and register a manager. Whilst acknowledging that the impact upon service users has been minimal, the lack of a Registered Manager, has to be reflected in the home's judgement for leadership and management, as such it is considered to be adequate.

The staff team is well informed and understand their roles and responsibilities. Staff know who they are accountable to and what tasks and responsibilities are delegated to them. They feel well supported by the home's management. Consistent and regular supervision, coupled with team meetings, provide staff with good opportunities to discuss their role, their professional development and the impact that working with children with complex needs has upon them.

Young people receive excellent care from a professional, dedicated and stable staff team. The strong, visible management of the home positively promotes the ethos of care and all staff fully understand their roles and responsibilities. Staff training is excellent. There are regular opportunities for all staff to complete mandatory training and high levels of specialist training are a key feature of this service. Staff feel the management team fully supports personal and professional development and supervision arrangements are robust and highly effective. Staff comments indicate that this is an exceptional environment to work in, with excellent supports to develop as individuals and as a team. Staff turnover is very low indeed, with the newest staff member having been in post for over three years. Young people enjoy an unparalleled consistency of care, which parents and carers report as being both reassuring and effective.

Staff are provided with a high quality induction and further training, support and resources and therefore understand the developmental needs of young people. The excellent training covers all mandatory areas such as safeguarding, behaviour

management and first aid. The staff have a strong focus on promoting positive outcomes and to enhance the well-being of young people. The staff work proactively to help young people overcome barriers and to succeed.

Good communication between staff ensures that young people's individual needs are consistently met. Young people take an active part in the running of the home and they are encouraged to make their views known, through discussions with staff and by attending house meetings. Staff ensure that a safe, secure and nurturing environment is maintained which assists young people to make real progress and to fulfil their individual potential.

The management have a strong commitment to meeting young people's needs. Despite the short-term respite nature of the service, both parents and social workers report significant positive progress in young people accessing the home. Young people grow in confidence and self-reliance, despite their complex needs and this is a testament to the impact the care team make in helping young people aspire, irrespective of their disability ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation or faith. The management and staff view young people with disabilities as individuals who have a right to experience all opportunities afforded to their peers within the community. This culture of inclusion further enhances young people's social and emotional development and sense of belonging.

The interim manager has maintained the home's rigorous internal quality assurance monitoring systems. She regularly checks all reporting systems and comments if any record fails to meet either the home's policies and procedures or national regulations. Regular internal monitoring reports are produced which help the home to develop its practice and ensure that young people are receiving the care and support they need; these are shared periodically with Ofsted. Regular external monitoring is undertaken each month by senior staff accompanied by representatives of the local council this provides additional quality assurance and includes consultation with young people wherever possible. Reports generated from these visits are routinely shared with Ofsted and directly link into the home's development plan. The home's Statement of Purpose fully reflects the ethos and functions of the setting.

Staff are highly competent, skilled and experienced in working with young people with complex learning and health needs. Exceptional and enthusiastic staff promote the wishes and feelings in all areas of a young person's care. The resourceful and inspiring management of this service ensures young people receive meticulous and innovative care within a safe and stimulating environment.

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.