

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Ann-Marie Born
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This home is part of a local authority children's disability service offering care for children and young people aged between 5 and 17 years with learning disabilities and/or physical disabilities.

The property is purpose built, all on one level and provides accommodation for eight children receiving short break services. Longer-term care can be offered to three young people within an attached bungalow, which is self-contained.

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**.

Children and young people are safe and thriving as a result of the personalised care and exceptional relationships they enjoy with staff and each other. Children and young people are treated with warmth, dignity and respect. This effectively promotes significant outcomes for children and young people. Children and young people enjoy a range of inclusive meaningful activities. Thus providing them with new life experiences while improving confidence and building self-esteem. Parents and social workers report very positively about the quality of care and experiences for young people. A social worker stated, 'the home makes these children's worlds bigger. They can have friends, can have a sleepover, they go out on activities they wouldn't be able to do otherwise.'

Management and staff know the children and young people in their care extremely well. This knowledge, coupled with excellent individual behaviour management strategies, ensure children and young people learn to manage their behaviours and respond positively. However, not all children and young people are being encouraged to reflect on their behaviours following the imposition of a sanction.

This is an outstanding home. Excellent audit procedures ensure that the care of children and young people is maintained to a high standard and development continues. The development of the unit for children and young people with complex

health needs and life limiting conditions is an invaluable service. All children and young people fully benefit from the home's consistent aspiration for their futures.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the service should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure that where any sanctions are used children are encouraged to have their views recorded in the records kept by the home. (NMS 3.18)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Children and young people make exceptional progress in developing sustainable attachments both with staff members and each other. The resultant increase in self-esteem allows children and young people to have faith in their abilities and skills and the confidence to try new things. Individual children and young people's outstanding progress in all aspects of their lives is clearly noted by family and involved agencies. A social worker said, 'all of them have become to some degree more independent. For example, one will pack and organise his bags and another will lift his arms and assist with dressing. They all enjoy being there.'

Children and young people feel valued, worthwhile and that they are individually important. This sense of belonging and interest enables children and young people to settle and fully benefit from their time in the home. A staff member described a young person's achievements with pride, 'he will take you by the hand and lead you to the kitchen when he wants something now instead of just sitting there and making a noise.'

Short break stays are extremely well planned with children and young people of similar needs and abilities being placed together. A parent said, 'she is with children with the same abilities as herself which is important to me.'

All children and young people's holistic health needs are exceptionally well met. Children and young people learn the importance of self-care skills and participate, where they are able, in their personal care. A parent said, 'she has progressed and she has been in the shower there and they have helped her with that and she has learnt how to wash herself. She is learning her own personal hygiene.'

Following consultation with parents, a unit within the home has been specifically developed for children and young people with complex health needs and life limiting conditions. Exceptional partnership arrangements and extensive planning with health practitioners and parents ensure that complex health needs are comprehensively addressed. Consequently children and young people enjoy positive social and life

experiences and their parents have confidence that their complex health needs will be met. A parent commented, 'he is so happy there, he refuses to go to the hospice but he will go to (name).'

All children and young people resident in the home or on short breaks attend school or college daily. A strong culture for learning ensures education is promoted and children and young people benefit from the full support provided by staff. Children and young people report they enjoy school. As a result children and young people's interest in learning is sustained. Children and young people achieve educationally to the best of their abilities from their starting points. A young person reported that she had grown so much in confidence since she had been coming to the home that she is now a member of the school council.

Children and young people are actively enabled to engage in inclusive activities in the community. These include attending a local disco, swimming and weekly church attendance. These expand young people's horizons providing them with new experiences. A young person said, 'I like going to new places I've never been to before.' Children and young people use craftwork and time together creatively to enhance the home, for example, making posters about bullying and fire safety. Children and young people develop a sense of independence alongside improved feelings of belonging, self-worth and self-esteem as a consequence. A young person said, 'it's making my independence grow as I cried when I left my mum but now I like having my independence.'

Parents and carers report that they are extremely impressed by the level of communication from the home. Excellent contact arrangements are fully supported. Children and young people fully benefit from this holistic approach to their care allowing strong family relationships to be safely maintained.

Quality of care

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

Children and young people, their parents and professionals consistently praise the support and care provided by the home. Staff members genuinely care about and respect each individual child and young person. Children and young people both benefit from and recognise the warmth, strong commitment and high aspirations staff hold for them. As a result, children and young people thrive in the warm, caring and homely yet stimulating environment. Relationships between children and young people, staff and each other are excellent. Children and young people are fully supported to make good progress. A nurse said, 'they really do put the young person first,' and a parent stated, 'it is a fantastic service and he loves going there. When the car turns the corner and he sees the home he starts to laugh and clap his hands he is so excited to be there.'

Staff use innovative methods, in a range of communication techniques, to ensure that children and young people's views are captured. This ensures children and young people's wishes are taken into account in their care and in the running of the

home. A young person said, 'staff always listen, not just to me but to all of the children'. This level of care extends to arranging short breaks which promote and sustain the growth of friendships and allow for shared interests to be maintained. A social worker said, 'I like them being able to have girly nights where they are pampered with their friends. They (the staff) match them really well together.'

The comprehensive complaint system is fully understood by all involved and no complaints have been received. Staff ensure that any concerns or 'worries' are shared by the child or young person as they are experiencing the situation so that they can be immediately addressed. An innovative 'Worries Box', decorated by young people, is readily available to them. This enhances children and young people's confidence in their abilities to share their feelings and trust that their needs will be met. A young person said, 'staff let me be myself and I can talk to them about anything'.

Excellent care planning fully incorporates all of a child or young person's equality, diversity, holistic health and social needs. Individual plans, complemented by comprehensive 'This is Me' booklets, ensure that personalised care is focused on achievable, appropriately tailored targets. These are effectively followed in practice ensuring children and young people receive outstanding care during their placement or short break. Staff work proactively and positively with other agencies, including palliative care, specialist and generic health agencies, education and social workers. This ensures children and young people receive continuity of care and achievements are shared and built upon.

Partnership working with health professionals is a major strength. Specialist treatment is fully supported by day-to-day holistic health care within the home. Innovate practice, including the use of the 'medi-screen' linked directly with the local hospital, ensures that children and young people with life threatening conditions are able to safely enjoy their stay. Parents can relax in the knowledge that their child will be cared for without the need for unnecessary hospital admissions. One parent commented, 'we wouldn't have a life if they hadn't been so supportive,' and another said, 'we wouldn't be where we are today without them.'

Children and young people's life experience are enhanced as a result of participation in activities that they would not be able to otherwise experience. This effectively promotes their sense of self, self-esteem and social and life skills.

Children and young people enjoy staying at and living in a home which is very well equipped to meet their needs. Children and young people can share in activities in a range of spaces, including sensory room and craft room, or spend time alone relaxing in their bedrooms or personal lounge. Children and young people are welcomed into their short break rooms with familiar objects and bedding and feel that this is 'their home away from home'.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

safe.

Children and young people report that they feel safe and are safe. Children and young people are protected from harm by the proactive staff team, for whom safeguarding is a priority. Professionals and parents universally report their confidence in the safeguarding levels within the home. Children and young people do not experience bullying and staff promote their safety in and outside the home. Opportunities for children and young people to go missing are effectively minimised and supported by excellent individual risk assessments. There have not been any episodes of young people being missing from care. However, agreed local protocols with police and partner agencies offer further safeguards if required.

Some children and young people display challenging and complex behaviours which present risks and challenges to keep them and staff safe. Excellent, individual behaviour management strategies are consistently applied, allowing children and young people to understand the difference between positive and negative behaviours. Staff are effectively trained in physical intervention procedures which accurately reflect legislation, including the opportunity to be seen by a medical practitioner. All restraint episodes are monitored robustly by the manager. Any concerns are identified and quickly addressed, providing further safeguards and a reduction in the number of physical interventions needed. Sanctions are fair and proportionate. However, not all children and young people are encouraged to express their feelings following a sanction. This does not provide them with an opportunity to reflect on the consequences of their behaviours.

Children and young people are taught about road safety and information is available to them about a road safety initiative in a format they can understand. In addition, an excellent pictorial representation system is used effectively to help children and young people understand 'Stranger Danger'. This innovative practice enhances life skills and well-being while keeping children and young people safe.

Children and young people's physical safety is assured by identifying and meeting their assessed needs. Physical safety is a high priority within the home and correct equipment is available for all children and young people. Appropriate maintenance checks and fire practices further promote safety. Fire evacuation steps are prominently displayed in signs on the unit's walls. Children and young people are individually safeguarded by auditory electronic monitoring measures that inform staff if they are at risk. For example, if they are having a seizure in their sleep. A comprehensive written policy sets out how the devices are to be used and how children and young people's legitimate privacy is protected. Children and young people's well-being is promoted by these measures.

Robust local authority recruitment procedures ensure that staff are carefully selected before appointment. Stringent monitoring procedures help prevent unsuitable people from having the opportunity to harm children and young people. Staff are well aware of their safeguarding responsibilities and reporting arrangements. Staffs' current knowledge is maintained through regularly refreshing their training. Children and

young people's safety and security are assured as a result. A parent said, 'he is absolutely, positively safe there'.

Leadership and management

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

Exceptional management arrangements provide strong leadership and effective partnership working to a committed and experienced staff team. The enthusiastic and committed management team know all of the children and young people in their care well and consistently communicate high expectations to staff. Excellent arrangements exist for monitoring the quality of care. The manager is ambitious for children and young people to achieve the best they can within their abilities. This dedicated enthusiasm is communicated to staff, thereby continually improving care, and is acknowledged by parents and professionals. An advanced sensory impairment practitioner wrote, 'you have worked well together as a team and have managed to cross agency boundaries that do not normally get crossed.'

The management team maintain a close day-to-day overview of each individual child and young person and the daily running of the home. Any identified shortfalls are promptly addressed. This ensures high standards are maintained, in addition to fully contributing to children and young people's explicit sense of belonging. Independent monitoring visits routinely contribute to improvements. The previous recommendation to ensure Regulation 33 reports are sent to Ofsted within 28 days of completion has been met. Overall, continued improvements have consistently been achieved. This is demonstrated by the home maintaining outstanding judgements over the course of inspections.

Children and young people's progress is monitored from their starting points and the demonstrable improvements the home has made to their outcomes are identified and celebrated. This effectively enhances children and young people's sense of being valued while promoting and maintaining high standards. The manager communicates with and notifies agencies, including Ofsted of significant information. Thereby ensuring young people are protected by multi-agency decision making. Records are diligently maintained and securely kept.

The home has worked hard in partnership with the local authority and health provision to continually improve the service for children and young people. As a result one of the units now caters for the needs of children and young people with complex health needs. This has had a positive impact on care for children and young people with complex and life limiting conditions and their families. Children and young people enjoy breaks in a space specifically tailored for their needs. Parents are able to relax sure in the knowledge that their children are being appropriately cared for.

The excellent children's guide is personalised for each individual child and young person. This allows children, young people and their parents to have an understanding of the care they will receive. The home operates in line with a

comprehensive Statement of Purpose which ensures children and young people are appropriately placed as all interested parties are fully aware of the service provided.

Future goals are specifically set out in a clear development plan for the service. All staff are suitably qualified or about to complete a relevant qualification. Regular training ensures staff remain skilled in child protection, physical interventions and core training areas. In addition, management and staff are specifically trained in specialist competencies, including autism and practical care skills. As a result children and young people are cared for by staff who are fully qualified to meet their needs. Good quality supervision ensure staff maintain high standards and gain necessary support. Staff are extremely positive about working in the home and the relationships they build with children, young people and each other. A staff member said, 'this is the first job I've ever had where I absolutely love coming to work. I love the homeliness feel of this and being able to see the children develop.'

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.