

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Rebecca Sharp
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home provides short breaks for young people with learning disabilities and physical disabilities. It provides short breaks for up to five young people at any time from 5 years to 17 years of age. A total of 43 young people use the service.

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**.

The home offers a highly personalised short break service to young people with disabilities. Each young person has an intricately detailed care plan designed to meet their specific needs, this incorporates extremely individualised day and night time routines. These plans are viewed as a live document and are reviewed and updated regularly due to the changes in behaviours displayed by the young people. Young people are kept very safe through attentive working practices; risk assessments are meticulously detailed to the specific needs of each young person to ensure that they are not placed at risk. All plans and risk assessments are regularly reviewed and updated. Any changes are communicated throughout the staff team, to parents, carers, social worker's and schools.

Staff are committed to ensuring the views of the young people are central to how the home operates and what experiences the young people are able to achieve. It is very much a 'needs led' service and the home is well equipped to meet the individual needs of all the young people. The outcomes achieved by young people are exceptional in all aspects of their lives. They attend school and have all made astounding progress in their own way.

The quality of care in the home is outstanding, and staff work extremely hard to offer excellent and genuine care. Keyworkers have an elaborate knowledge of the young people under their care and develop positive relationships with their families. This allows the building of trust which enables consistent care for the young people. One parent stated, 'the way my child has adapted to short breaks is due in part to the individual care, opportunities and experiences on offer and the fact that the

home actively liaises with all those involved to ensure they meet my child's needs.'

The manager of the home is committed to achieving excellent outcomes for young people. Monitoring processes are robust which inform the home's development plan. These evidence her motivation and desire for continual improvement. The management team, as a whole, is efficient and supports the whole staff team effectively. Staff receive good quality, regular supervision and annual appraisal. They have access to a broad range of training, including refresher training and specialist training. The staff are passionate about their work, and full of ideas and enthusiasm to enhance young people's short-break experience, consequently young people show that they enjoy visiting and their social skills and behaviours significantly improve.

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people have made significant progress in developing a positive self-view and development of their emotional resilience since attending the service. Young people make and form attachments with the staff and each other according to their abilities. Friendships are promoted through careful, considerate planning of short-break care to match young people to make the very best groupings for overnight stays. A member of staff from a local school for a young person said, 'When it is identified that certain children have formed attachments then every effort is made to enable them to have their breaks at the same time.' Consequently young people enjoy the company of others and over time become more confident and outgoing.

Young people's health needs are met well. The staff team are trained in caring for young people with complex health needs. Staff know the young people very well and can pick up on each individual's non-verbal communications if they are not feeling well or are unhappy. Young people develop in all aspects of their lives. Positive behaviour is promoted and encouraged using extremely individual strategies. Young people's physical health is supported by the staff team's commitment and determination in conjunction with external health agencies. Opportunities for young people to experience new things are plentiful. Young people make exceptional progress in developing their skills and confidence in accessing a range of activities including two local children's centres. A parent of a young person stated, 'a big thank you for all the efforts (the home) have put in for my child. It's amazing what he has achieved. I can't thank you enough.'

When young people leave the home, they are very well supported by staff. Photographs and recorded messages ensure a smooth transition back home. Whether this is a permanent move on from the service, or merely until their next visit, families have tools to promote communication with their children through their experiences at the home. The parent of one young person commented to the staff, 'thank you for the feedback from (my child's) stays. This allows me to talk to (them) about what (they have) been doing - the photographs are brilliant and allow me to see clearly what my child has achieved.' Consequently, relationships between parents and children are enhanced by their stay at the home.

Where it is appropriate, young people are encouraged to develop independence skills in areas such as self-care, mobility and life skills according to their individual abilities. Some individuals have made significant progress in areas such as communication and feeding themselves, through the fortitude of a dynamic and enthusiastic staff team. All young people are in education and transport arrangements ensure that young people arrive safely and on time. There are comprehensive communication systems between school and the home including written communication books, telephone updates and visits by staff. Consequently ideas and strategies are discussed and developed, leading to imaginative strategies to help young people make progress.

The home are pro-active in ascertaining the views and feeling of the young people. Feedback is sought after each stay and young people's likes and dislikes inform menu choices. Individuals enjoy the degree of personalisation to bedrooms to ensure their stay is as pleasurable and relaxed as possible. This has given the young people tremendous confidence to express themselves. Consequently, some young people have made suggestions for activities and toys.

Quality of care

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

The young people have access to a wide range of activities both on and off site. One social worker commented, 'if a child likes to engage in a particular activity every effort is made to support that when they come to (the home). ' Staff are prepared to research and identify appropriate local facilities, challenging barriers in order to ensure the young people's full participation and to enjoy and achieve to their maximum potential. For example: young people have enjoyed visits to a local farm; they have eaten out at local restaurants and have been bowling. As a result, young people gain confidence and develop new skills by experiencing new opportunities. Risk management is a strength and staff are keen to allow individual young people to take appropriate risks to aide both enjoyment and development. Recreational and educational achievements are celebrated in the vast amount of photographs which decorate the home. The staff update these quickly in order for individuals to see themselves and copies are given to parents. As a result, young people can reflect on positive experiences with staff and their family.

Staff consider all aspects of the young people's health at the point of admission. Medication is rigorously checked on arrival, at administration, and at discharge to ensure accuracy. Staff work proactively with other agencies to meet the medical and psychological needs of the young people. Information is circulated quickly to those who need to know, ensuring medical alerts are cascaded. The home works closely with individual's physical therapists to ensure their practice is consistent in supporting young people's physical needs. For those individuals who are more mobile, this is further encouraged by going on walks, playing in the garden and taking part in other such activities. As a result, young people's physical, emotional and psychological health needs are met.

There is a diverse staff team who all bring individual characteristics and ideas to their role benefitting the young people. They have extremely high aspirations for the young people they care for and help young people develop skills in order to manage their own behaviour and develop good relationships with adults and peers. There are very positive relationships between staff, young people and parents which are built on trust and understanding through skilled and professional working practice. These positive relationships enable staff to implement imaginative strategies in order to ensure the young people's short-break experience is enjoyable. Consequently, young people significantly increase their social skills, become more relaxed and develop new skills.

The young people's needs are central in the practice of staff and regular discussions take place around proactive behaviour management strategies for individuals. The team work well together using team meetings, handovers, and excellent communication systems to capture ideas, including those raised in supervision sessions, to ensure they deliver consistent care. This forms the basis for the highly individualised and meticulous care plans which are completed by staff and reviewed and updated regularly. The young person's background, behaviours, health issues, routines, cultural and religious needs and characteristics are all included in the care plans. These also include the strategies which work best for individuals; this enables a holistic and consistent approach to meeting their needs.

Young people are able to make positive choices in all aspects of their care from menu planning and activities, to personalising their bedrooms. Each young person is treated as an individual, for example, staff use a range of communication systems to communicate with young people. Staff are very skilled at interpreting non-verbal signals and sounds to ensure that a young person is happy and comfortable. As a result, young people feel listened to. A representative from the national youth advisory service attends each month and is available for the children as an independent advocate. Not only do they offer this service to the children, but it is also intended to support staff and families by directing them to appropriate agencies who can offer additional support for the young people. The representative records their observations and reports back on any issues or complaints. Complaints are handled efficiently to ensure the safety and wellbeing of young people.

Staff actively support young people to attend education, and they have regular contact with all of the young people's educational placements. Feedback from a member of staff from a local school stated: 'when any of the pupils at our school are going to stay at (the home) I am asked by key workers if we could share information of how we cover care for the pupil. Parents are always happy for me to share how we provide care with (the home) so that we can each follow the same care needs and staff are always happy to share information with myself if they have a pupil from our school already staying with themselves. I feel we have a good working relationship for the needs of the young person.' Through regular communication, phone calls, visits, and letters they ensure consistent care and develop new strategies to help young people make the best use of their opportunities.

The home is well maintained and spacious, and there is a well-equipped garden used

when the weather permits. The location, close to the city centre, enables easy access for parents and young people and allows young people the opportunity to attend a range of local amenities.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Risk management is a key strength and there are clear risk assessments in place for individual activities and ensure safe working practice for the staff team. These are reviewed on a regular basis to ensure they contain up-to-date information in order to keep young people safe. As a result, young people are safe and feel safe. All relevant health and safety checks are up to date and certificates are in place which again assures the safety and wellbeing of the young people and staff. There are high levels of support and supervision within the home and all external doors are secure due to the challenging behaviours and vulnerability of the young people. All outings and external activities are also closely supervised and as a result, young people do not go missing from the home. Collectively, the safeguarding practice at the home ensures that all young people have a strong sense of safety and can express themselves freely without fear of harm.

Each individual young person has a behaviour management plan. This ensures that all staff are using consistent strategies for the individual young people which promotes constant care, not only in managing challenging behaviour, but modifying these behaviours through communication, patience and understanding. This is an integral part of the care plan and is reviewed and updated regularly as young people begin to respond to alternative strategies. Staff provide consistent boundaries, and continually reinforce these by praising desired behaviour. Consequently young people generally behave well, and understand the expectations. Sanctions are extremely rare occurrences, and physical restraint is usually used as a caring hold to guide a young person, and prevent them harming themselves or others.

All staff receive regular training in child protection procedures and safeguarding vulnerable young people and are very much aware of how to report any concerns around possible abuse. Staff are also aware of the company's whistle blowing policy through regular discussions in staff meetings. Consequently, young people are further safeguarded by staff's well informed safe working practices. The home's complaints' procedures are made available to parents and young people to ensure they feel confident they could make a complaint if necessary. Although not every young person can verbalise a worry or complaint, staff are extremely capable at picking up on non-verbal inferences from young people which may indicate upset or dissatisfaction and act appropriately in order to meet that young person's needs.

There is a robust recruitment and selection process which is managed by the local authority human resources department. Records kept by the home exhibit a sound understanding of safer recruitment. This includes verbally verifying all previous employment within the care sector. As a result, young people are kept safe from

harm by being cared for by appropriately qualified and experienced staff who are suitable to work with young people.

Leadership and management

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

The home is managed successfully by a highly skilled, qualified and child focused manager who is committed to the continual improvement of the care provided to vulnerable young people. The assistant manager mirrors her level of commitment and enthusiasm, and this role modelling from the management team ensures the staff team as a whole apply these attributes to their practice. Consequently, the home runs efficiently and provides outstanding care for young people. Robust monitoring practices inform the manager of the strengths and weaknesses of the home, which in turn, inform the homes development plan; identifying further challenging, but realistic improvements for the service.

The local authority has restructured children's services recently. Pending confirmation of structure and approved recruitment, there have been underlying staffing issues for the service since the last inspection. A number of agency staff have been used in order to ensure sufficient staffing and supervision for the young people, alongside permanent staff completing additional hours. This has been successful in minimising the impact of change for young people.

Staff receive very good training opportunities, encompassing refresher training, professional development and specific skills-based courses to meet the specific needs of the young people using this service. The manager uses e-learning for a number of training packages as a cost effective means of development for staff. All staff are suitably qualified or completing their diploma qualification. Supervision is regular and of good quality and team meetings further support staff development by their content and frequency. Staff are also clear about their roles, and are proactive in accessing additional support for young people. As a result, young people are cared for by suitably qualified and well-supported staff.

There is a clear Statement of Purpose, which is regularly reviewed to reflect any changes made to the service. It provides an accurate reflection of the home. Placing authorities are clear about the aims and objectives of the home and what services and facilities it provides. Parents speak very highly of the home and staff frequently receive messages of thanks and appreciation. One parent said the home, 'is so valuable to us as a family and I really don't know where we would be without it. The short breaks enable us to catch up and recharge our batteries to enable us to carry on and then enjoy time as a family with a little bit more energy for us to carry on again.'

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.