

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Tracy Murty
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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. 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 exceptional care and support to young people during their short break stays. From their starting points, young people gain in confidence and skills and have improved outcomes. The staff team work tirelessly to ensure that each young person receives high quality care and that their views are central to all aspects of how the home is run. Young people are kept very safe by the staff team and parents report no concerns in relation to their children's safety when staying in this home.

Parents report exceptionally high levels of satisfaction in the services provided by this home. Placing authorities and independent reviewing officers (IRO) also praise the staff team for the highly personalised care they offer to young people during their stays. The staff team work closely with parents and other involved agencies to ensure that young people receive consistent care during their stays. They also support families in their own homes, to be able to meet the needs of their children. Staff support young people to learn new skills, and to enjoy a wide range of social activities.

Managers use a wide range of monitoring systems to regularly ensure that the services they provide continue to meet the complex needs of the young people. They demonstrate a real passion for improving the quality of care and outcomes for all young people using the service. They consistently seek to gain the views and feelings of young people, their families, as well as placing authorities and other stakeholders. The staff team feel exceptionally well supported by managers to perform their roles. Staff feel able to bring forward suggestions and ideas, confident in the knowledge

that managers will seriously consider and implement them whenever possible. Any potential weaknesses in the service are quickly identified and dealt with by managers. This leads to a culture amongst all the staff team of seeking to continually improve the services provided for young people and their families.

All documentation relating to young people is highly personalised and reflects their complex needs. A regular review of all plans and assessments further ensures that the changing needs of young people are met at all times. Young people are kept safe when staying in this home. Risk assessments and missing from care protocols reflect the needs of each young person and high staffing levels and supervision of young people provide for their safety at all times. No breaches of regulation were identified during this inspection.

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **outstanding**.

Young people gain in confidence and skills during their short break stays in this home. From their starting points, they learn to do such things as removing their bedding, placing it in the washing machine and basic personal care skills. They feel secure in coming to stay in this home, with one placing social worker stating about a young person, 'they love coming here with a passion, their face beams.'

Young people continue to access educational provisions, with staff supporting the transport arrangements. Regular communication between the home and schools provides for consistency of care for all young people. Young people form friendships and attachments with other young people using the service. Every effort is made by the staff team to enable young people to visit at the same time as others they know and like. Such consideration to detail further promotes a sense of belonging for young people.

Young people have their complex health needs met whilst staying in this home. Staff receive specialist training and support through the local health services to ensure that they are competent to support young people. One placing authority praised the staff team for their competency in meeting health needs, 'the staff are able to deal with a wide range of specialist and complex health needs of young people, with confidence and competence.' Parents report very high levels of confidence in the staff team's ability to safely care for their children's medical and health needs at all times. Staff keep in close contact with families and provide detailed accounts of all aspects of the care provided to their children. Parents therefore, feel able to relax, stating they have total confidence in the staff team and care provided to their children.

Young people enjoy a wide range of social activities when staying in this home. They go for walks to local parks, use local libraries, attend trampoline groups and have trips out in the minibus. Staff support them to be fully engaged in the local community and to be able to make a positive contribution to it.

Young people look forward to staying in this home and thoroughly enjoy the time they spend there. One parent stated, 'Coming for short breaks has made him who he. He is more independent and he has learned so much from the staff.' Staff encourage them to state their wishes and feelings in relation to what activities they take part, what food they eat and in decorating and furnishing the home. Photographs are taken of all activities they take part in, which are then shared with parents at the end of their stay. This provides invaluable memories for young people and parents as to what they have achieved and done each stay.

Quality of care

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

Young people enjoy very positive relationships with the staff and each other during their stays. Very detailed consideration is given by management to the matching of young people's needs for each stay. Each young person has a key worker who oversees all aspects of their care and maintains their case records. Prior to coming to stay, young people and their parents receive a letter. This sets out the room they will be staying in, who will be their main carer and what activities they may wish to take part in. This attention to detail provides parents with peace of mind and young people with a sense of security.

The staff team and managers have worked hard to ensure that the wishes, views and feelings of all young people are known and taken into consideration. This includes ensuring that their views are fully recorded for any review meetings. One independent reviewing officer (IRO) praised the staff team for their commitment to consulting with young people, stating 'The staff are incredibly proactive in engaging young people. Parents feedback is also incredibly strong about how well they are consulted with.' The views and feelings of young people are regularly sought and recorded. Photographs of young people are on prominent display throughout the home, showing what they have done and their responses to activities they take part in. Parents receive portfolios of photos and details of what their child has done during each stay. One parent stated, 'I love getting the photos and details of what my child has done. It shows me how happy they are during their stay and makes me feel very much included.'

Care plans for all young people are written in the first person, from the perspective of the young person. All plans and risk assessments are completed to an exceptionally high standard. They reflect the changing needs of the young people and how their complex needs will be met. Staff demonstrate an exceptional knowledge and insight of the young people they care for. Handover meetings between each staff shift include detailed accounts of each young person and how their needs will be met during their stay. The home employs a cook, who is also part of the handover meetings. This enables them to fully consider the dietary needs of the young people staying each night and to plan for meal times. Meals provided for young people are healthy, nutritious and reflect the requirements of each young person. Staff also use these meetings to ensure that medication, personal care and activities are well planned for and continue to meet the needs of each young person.

It provides a very flexible and child-focused response to their needs at all times.

The home works closely with a wide range of professionals and agencies. Regular consultation and training is provided by health colleagues, including occupational therapists. This is in order to ensure that young people receive the specific care they need at all times. Staff also work closely with parents and support them to ensure that any aids or adaptations needed in the family home are identified and provided. The staff act as positive advocates for both young people and their parents at all times. An independent advocacy service also visits the home regularly to offer support and advice to young people and their families if needed.

The home is located in an urban area with very easy access to a wide range of facilities and resources. Young people are able to take part in a wide range of activities and feel integrated in the local community. The home has their own minibus and transports young people to events and activities, further promoting their engagement and sense of belonging in the community. The home is decorated and furnished to an exceptionally high standard both internally and externally. Young people have contributed to such things as choosing new carpets for some areas of the home. Specialist equipment is provided for young people, to ensure that their specific and complex physical needs are met at all times. One parent stated, 'the home has a lovely feel to it, there are lots of photos around the home and my child has the personal space they need when they stay.'

The staff team demonstrate a detailed awareness of the cultural and identity needs of each young person and respond to them positively. This has included staff starting to learn another language, in order to be able to communicate with young people whose first language is not English. Staff have also ensured that parents whose first language is not English have been provided with information in their first language and signs around the home being displayed in other languages. Plans and records clearly reflect the diverse needs of each young person and staff ensure that those needs are met during each stay.

Staff support young people to continue to attend their educational provisions whilst accessing the short break service. Close communication takes place with transport providers and school staff. This ensures consistency of care for young people and peace of mind for their families. The use of communication books and diaries further ensures that all involved agencies and families are kept informed of the changing needs of young people, particularly those who are nonverbal.

Young people are provided with a children's guide which includes information on how to make a complaint. Staff regularly consider the needs of each young person and work closely with parents to ensure that any issues or concerns are considered and addressed as a matter of urgency. There has only been one formal complaint since the last inspection. The managers work closely with parents and involved agencies to ensure that any concerns are taken very seriously and resolved as soon as possible.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people are kept safe by the highly diligent staff team. Detailed risk assessments reflect the specific and complex needs of each young person and how their safety will be met during their stay. Staff regularly review all assessments and plans to ensure that they remain fit for purpose. As part of the daily handover meetings, staff consider what activities young people will be involved in, which bedroom they will be sleeping in and medication requirements. This information is then used to devise and implement specific and live risk assessments and shift plans for each young person.

Staffing levels are high within and outside of the home, affording young people security and protection from any actual or potential harm. Parents report very high levels of satisfaction at how well the staff team protect their children from any harm during their stays. One parent stated, 'it is a home-from-home and I never worry about my child when they are having a short break.'

There have been no reported incidents of young people going missing from the home since the last inspection. The clear focus and attention to the individual needs of each young person provides for their safety at all times. Security within the home and gardens is exceptionally good, with rigorous procedures in place to prevent young people from being placed at risk from the physical environment. Health and safety checks are undertaken by the staff team on a daily basis, to ensure the environment remains safe at all times. Young people benefit from staying in a home which has been skilfully adapted to meet their specific needs. This has been done without leading to an institutionalised feel. Parents and professionals comment on how welcoming and warm the home environment is when visiting.

Recruitment and selection of staff for the home is very robust and prevents any unsuitable persons from being able to work with young people. The Registered Manager has clear and comprehensive systems in place to ensure that all routine checks are completed and updated. Any allegations receive prompt consideration and action by the Registered Manager. Records are detailed and reflect the competence and skill of the manager in ensuring the on-going safety of young people, whilst supporting those subject to an allegation. Staff demonstrate an excellent awareness of their safeguarding responsibilities and regularly attend training on child protection. Staff also have a detailed awareness of their duties and responsibilities to ensure that young people are protected from harm at all times and of what action management would take, in the event of an allegation being made.

Young people have detailed behaviour management plans in place. These clearly set out their specific needs and how staff will respond to them. This enables staff to use a wide range of diffusion and distraction techniques and reduces the need for the use of restraint. Restraint is very seldom used by staff with young people in this home. This reflects staff competence and skill in knowing how to respond to any challenging behaviour which young people may present.

Leadership and management

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

The home is run by an exceptionally effective and efficient Registered Manager, supported by a highly efficient assistant manager and staff team. Managers have devised and implemented systems for monitoring and tracking all aspects of the care provided for young people, which are highly effective and lead to continuous improvement. The manager has a detailed awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of the home and continually strives to improve the quality of care and outcomes for all young people who use the service. The staff team work closely with managers and display a detailed awareness and understanding of the aims and objectives of the service and their part in ensuring that these are met. One staff member stated, 'I am able to contribute my ideas and suggestions to managers at all times and these are listened to and acted on wherever possible to improve the services we provide.'

Managers work closely with the placing authority and parents, in order to resolve any concerns or issues, which may arise. Informal resolution of any concerns raised means that the formal complaints process is very seldom used by young people, parents or involved agencies. One placing social worker praised managers for their total commitment to ensuring that parents felt supported and listened to at all times. They stated, 'the managers always take very seriously any issues raised by parents and work quickly and proactively to ensure a satisfactory resolution.' Parents report very high levels of satisfaction in the communication with them by the entire staff team. The use of communication books, diaries, phone calls and emails provides them with open and frequent means to discuss the care provided to their children and any specific issues, which may arise.

The home has a very detailed and comprehensive Statement of Purpose in place. This is provided to parents prior to their child starting to use the service. Young people also receive a children's guide in a form, which they can easily access and understand. Placing authorities are clear about the aims and objectives of the service and consistently report high levels of satisfaction that the home delivers the services referred to in its Statement of Purpose. The home also has a detailed development plan in place. The Registered Manager has used information gained from monthly monitoring to inform the plan and ensures that it is regularly reviewed and updated. This sets out both short-term and longer-term goals for the service and how they will be achieved.

The home is able to demonstrate how young people's life chances have improved since starting to use this service. Parents confirm this and report noticeable improvements for their children in relation to independence skills, improved socialisation skills and confidence. One parent stated, 'my child is able to do far more for themselves now than before they started having short breaks at this home. The changes in him are amazing and it is all down to the staff at the home.'

The home is located in an urban area, close to a wide range of community facilities.

The staff team ensures that all young people engage in local activities and feel fully integrated into the local community during their stay at the home. This promotes their sense of inclusion and engagement and promotes increased self-confidence and a sense of well-being. Each young person has their own bedroom during their stay, which is personalised by the staff team prior to their arrival, to reflect their specific likes and needs.

Staffing levels are high to reflect the complex needs of each young person. Agency and relief staff are used by the home, alongside permanent members of staff, pending recruitment of more permanent staff to the home. This has not undermined the high quality of care provided to young people, as the manager ensures that consistency of care is provided on each shift. Staff have access to a wide range of training and development opportunities, which increases their competence and skills in their roles. There is very close working relationships with health agencies, who provide consultation and training for all staff on specific health and medication issues. A senior member of staff has the lead for ensuring that all staff training and development needs are identified and met, with regular reviews and refresher training being provided. This ensures that the staff team maintain their skills and competence.

Records maintained by the home are clear, and provide detailed and relevant information on each young person accessing the service. A key work system for each young person is in place, with this person ensuring that records and files are considered, updated and reviewed on a very regular basis. Portfolios of photographs and information on what young people have done during each stay are maintained and shared with parents. Reviews of the care provided take place at required intervals, with records reflecting the decisions made and agreed actions. A parent said of the staff team, 'It is not just a job to them; they do it with their hearts and souls. They are angels with wings and I would encourage any parent who is thinking about short breaks to go for it, it has changed ours and our child's lives.'

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.