

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Caroline Oldham
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home provides short breaks for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Up to five young people can be accommodated at any one time.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: a service that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

Good: a service 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**.

Each young person has a very detailed care plan designed to meet their specific needs, this incorporates a personalised night time care plan. Extensive risk assessments clearly set out strategies to keep young people safe. Plans are thoroughly reviewed and updated regularly, and communicated to all who need to know. Staff have high, but realistic aspirations for the young people in their care. Through regular discussion and observations they are able to affect positive change, and consequently young people make progress. Where appropriate, young people are involved in some capacity in their care plans and reviews, and parents are kept fully involved.

The quality of care in the home is outstanding, and staff work extremely hard to offer excellent care, and young people make significant progress due to the skilled interventions of the staff team. For example, over time they increase their ability to communicate and participate in group activities and contribute to group discussions. Within their capabilities young people are involved in many aspects of the home and enjoy choosing activities, selecting soft furnishings and even helping out with the vacuum cleaning. Young people demonstrate that they like the staff team, and know that they care about them.

Leaders and the manager have thorough systems in place to monitor progress, and are fully aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the home. There are systems in place for identifying trends and issues of concern using the extensive skills of the staff team. Staff receive good quality, regular supervision, and 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 their short-break experience, consequently young people show that they enjoy visiting and

their social skills and behaviours significantly improve.

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 young people are not placed at risk.

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people make and form attachments with the staff and each other according to their abilities. Staff promote friendships through careful, considerate planning of short-break care to match young people with similar ages and abilities, or through school contacts. However, they do not make assumptions about friendships, and always try hard to make the very best groupings for overnight stays. Consequently young people enjoy the company of others and over time become more confident and outgoing, exhibit less self-harming behaviours, and are relaxed and enjoy the extensive range of activities. Staff work very closely with parents, schools and other agencies such as community mental health services to help young people to develop a positive self-view, and building emotional resilience. Examples were shared of systems being tried to help young people cope with the concept of time, to help them become less anxious. Parents commented on how dramatic these techniques are in improving their child's behaviour.

Young people are encouraged to enjoy an active lifestyle including playing on the equipment in the garden such as slides and swings, going for walks around the town and getting involved in gardening projects. Young people's likes and dislikes influence the weekly menu, and there is always plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables available.

All young people are in education and transport arrangements ensure that young people arrive safely and on time. There are very comprehensive communication systems between school and the home including written communication books, visits by staff and shared training. Consequently ideas and strategies are discussed and developed leading to imaginative strategies to help young people make progress.

The home has been pro-active to ascertaining the views and feeling of the young people by involving an external professional to come in and work with the young people, to ascertain their views of the home and their likes and dislikes. This has given the young people tremendous confidence to express themselves. Consequently some young people have chosen soft furnishings and made suggestions for activities and toys.

Where appropriate young people help to do the laundry, and do simple domestic tasks, so young people take pride in their environment. When young people leave the home, they are very well supported by staff, through the use of photographs, DVDs and other imaginative ideas and so are able to make smooth and successful transitions.

Quality of care

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

Young people have very good relationships with the staff team. Parents say that young people clearly enjoy their visits and they are kept well informed of how the visit has been, through a communications book, emails and phone calls. Staff have high aspirations and hopes for the young people, and by working closely with parents are able to implement imaginative strategies to make the short-break experience more enjoyable, and to improve outcome for the young people. Consequently young people significantly increase their social skills, reduce self-harming behaviour, become more relaxed and develop new skills.

Staff are skilled at helping young people to behave in appropriate ways and to set clear limits in place. They very gently distract and calm young people and if necessary guide them away from potential problems. 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 is essential to achieve effective care and young people show significant improvements through the implementation by staff of imaginative ideas. Consequently young people receive consistent high quality care and consistent messages.

The complaints procedure has been produced in other formats to assist young people to make a complaint. Additionally parents are encouraged to raise any concerns that they may have. Consequently there is an excellent dialogue between parents and staff and any minor grievances are aired and resolved.

All young people have extremely complex care needs. There are highly detailed care plans for the young people; these include cultural background, and personal identity. They are meticulous in setting out the specific, individualised needs of the young person, and, where appropriate, their religious and cultural needs. Where possible young people are actively involved in some capacity in the plans that concern them, and staff provide support. Staff regularly review the plans and revise strategies as young people make progress. Each young person is treated as an individual, for example, staff use a range of communication systems to communicate with young people. They may restrict the spoken word to no more than three words to make comprehension easier. Staff are very skilled at interpreting non-verbal signals and sounds to ensure that a young person is happy and comfortable. Activities are sometimes for more than one young person such as a visit from a local music and drama group, or individual, such as drawing or playing games. However, staffing levels are such that individual attention can always be given to young people, to ensure they are happy with the activity, and they can choose to disengage at any time and their wishes are respected. Parents said this was a real strength of the staff team, that their children were not pressured into activities just because it was there. Young people have the freedom to make choices and their views are respected. Social workers spoken to were very please with the care offered by the staff team,

and felt that the staff were very welcoming and offer a warm environment where young people can meet up with friends and have a 'sleep-over'.

Staff consider all aspects of the young people's health at registration. Due to exceedingly thorough health monitoring, health needs can be addressed. Medication is scrupulously checked on admission, 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 disseminated quickly to those who need to know, ensuring medical alerts are cascaded. Staff make freshly cooked meals with plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables, and young people are encouraged to develop a good understanding of living a healthy lifestyle. For young people who are mobile there are regular opportunity for physical activities through playing in the garden, going for walks and gardening.

Staff actively support young people to attend education, and they have regular contact with all the educational placements. 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 large very well equipped garden. The location close to the centre of the town enables parents and young people to easy access and enables young people the opportunity to walk to the shops and parks.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

All staff all receive regular training in child protection procedures, and demonstrate an excellent working knowledge of what to do if an allegation is made against a member of staff. There are comprehensive individual risk assessments for each young person. Staffing levels are frequently high for most activities and situations, to ensure that young people are kept safe from harm. There have been no incidents of young people going missing, or coming to harm. 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.

There has been no staff recruitment in recent months. However, the staff recruitment and selection process is very thorough, and comprehensive checks are made to ensure that young people are always cared for by appropriately experienced staff. This ensures that all staff are suitable to work with young people and they are kept safe from harm.

The environment is very well maintained and kept safe through a system of weekly and monthly internal safety checks and risk assessments. In addition, services such

as electricity, electrical appliances and fire fighting equipment are regularly checked by the appropriate professional companies. There is an emergency escape plan which is practiced regularly so that staff and young people know what to do in an emergency. To enhance understanding an imaginative idea has been devised and some young people are 'walked through' a scenario with an accompanying information sheet in 'widget format' to allay anxiety. Visitors to the home have their identification checked and they are signed in and out.

Leadership and management

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

The manager is held in high regard by the staff team, social workers and parents. The recommendation from the last inspection has been addressed and the children's guide now includes details on how to contact Ofsted and the Children's Rights Director. The registered person carries out monthly monitoring visits which always include consultation with young people. The manager also has a very comprehensive system of internal audits.

There is a clear Statement of Purpose, which is regularly reviewed to reflect changes. 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. They say that the home provides a welcoming environment for the young people and their parents and carers. Parents speak very highly of the home and staff frequently receive messages of thanks and appreciation. Frequently staff 'go the extra mile'; arranging transport for hospital appointments, liaising with schools to introduce behaviour management strategies, and working closely with other agencies to devise plans to help young people reach their full potential. Where able, young people understand the purpose of their placement in the home and their future plans, and they are actively involved in the review process. Staff are also clear about their roles, and are proactive in accessing additional support for young people.

To date the home has had a very stable staff team, with few changes. Staff rotas are designed to ensure excellent staffing levels matched according to the detailed needs of each young person. Staff receive very good training opportunities, encompassing refresher training, professional development and specific skills-based training to meet the very special needs of the young people using this service. All staff are suitably qualified or completing their qualification. All staff receive good quality, regular supervision, and staff say that they are able to seek advice and support when necessary. The manager confirms that she is well supported by senior management. The home is financially well-resourced.

Care planning documents demonstrates that staff have a very thorough approach to meet young people's individual needs. They have working documents with high levels of detail that are regularly reviewed and revised. All documentation is kept in a locked filing cabinet within a locked office.

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.