

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 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 staff team know the young people very well, and through a variety of communication methods are able to involve them in very many aspects of the running of the home. A real strength of the home is that they provide highly personalised, well-planned care, with staffing ratios adjusted and activities adapted, to meet the very individual and special needs of every young person. Consequently young people make very good progress.

Parents report that young people express pleasure in their short-break stays and look forward to the visits. Young people express extremely positive views of the home via an independent advocate making comments such as: 'I love (the home), it is great' and the home, 'is good and it is awesome'.

Leaders and the manager have exemplary systems in place to monitor progress, that go significantly beyond the regulatory requirements and the senior management team are fully aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the home. The manager prepares reports that identify trends and issues of concern and shares these with the staff team to share best practice and drive improvements. All the staff team are ambitious and energetic to make continuous improvements and they take on additional roles to drive forward developments and enhance opportunities for young people.

Children and young people are generally kept safe through safe working practices, which are extremely well risk assessed. Young people say that they feel safe, and that they can communicate with staff if they feel unhappy. However, serious incidents that are notified to the regulator are not always followed up by informing

Ofsted of the outcome of the investigation, although this is completed. This prevents the regulator from being assured that concerns have been resolved. However, overall staff are vigilant to keep young people safe from harm.

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 following an incident notifiable under Regulation 30, the home contacts the responsible authority to discuss any further action that may need to be taken. (NMS 24.4)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **outstanding**.

Due to the range of communication skills of the staff team, young people are able to exercise choice in day-to-day matters and wider issues, where appropriate. Young people express their pleasure in having a short break in the home through their own methods of communication. For some, on arrival, it is a smile, and hardly a backward glance as they go to play with the toys. For others, they are able to say that they enjoy their short break and like to meet their friends. Some young people say 'I like coming to (the home) because it makes me happy.' Some young people show care towards others and recognise their needs, some reduce their incidents of self-harming behaviour as they become more relaxed.

Young people enjoy a healthy lifestyle with plenty of opportunities for exercise and a having a good diet. They learn about appropriate behaviour and how to manage their feelings and emotions in an appropriate way. Due to the close liaison with the schools that young people attend, there is a two way flow of information relating to behaviour strategies and important information, which ensures young people receive consistent care. Consequently young people's attendance at school is excellent and they make very good progress given their starting points.

The outcomes for the young people are exceptional, as they have opportunities to try new activities and experiences that for some young people would not be available to them without the input of the home, for example, going swimming. Their independence is always promoted through the wide range of activities such as developing skills in self-care, simple food preparation, simple domestic chores and baking. By using measureable targets staff can demonstrate the progress that the young people make, and this helps them progress to meet new and more challenging targets.

Quality of care

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

The staff know the young people very well and use their excellent working relationships to help young people make progress. Some more able young people learn to show care and consideration for others, for example, suggesting that more sensory books are bought for a young person with a visual impairment. Short breaks are an opportunity for young people to experience group living and to have opportunities for group activities. Some young people enjoy going out together, or enjoy the company of a member of staff, for example, by going out for a walk with them.

Most young people have some communication issues and staff use different levels of interaction with young people to engage with them. For example, a member of staff may juggle a number of methods of communication such as Makaton sign language, eye contact, and also use an electronic tablet to look at a programme with the young person. Staff are also imaginative and pro-active in overcoming challenges to find out how the young people can influence the day-to-day running of the home. Some young people are involved in a number of strategies to enhance communication, some meet with the independent advocate and make suggestions about more art work, new flower beds and more signage. Meetings with management are arranged to help them understand how they can influence decisions and they see their requests being followed through. In addition, staff capture the views of young people through observations called 'my voice', noting when young people have made choices to demonstrate their preferences for activities and food.

All young people have clear and comprehensive short-break care plans, that set out their specific, individual needs. These plans include information about specific disabilities, methods of communication and other relevant information such as cultural backgrounds. Other people who are significant to them also contribute to these plans and it is a real strength of the staff team that they work closely with parents, social workers, schools and health professionals to ensure very high standards of care.

The home is exemplary in its integration into the local community. For example, they liaise with the local fire station and arrange to send a fire engine for young people to see and explore. They also link with the local community for fund raising support, and are highly successful in engaging an excellent response.

The staff work closely with all health professionals and seek their expert advice appropriately. Staff receive specialist training for administering some medication. The administration of medication follows a robust procedure and handover sessions are used to clarify medication administration for the following shift. Young people enjoy the freshly cooked food served to meet their individual needs, for example, giving food on two plates to offer smaller more palatable portions. Any dietary restrictions and allergies are taken into consideration when planning menus. Young people have plenty of opportunities for exercise such as swimming, yoga and walks, in addition to enjoying the extensive specialist play equipment in the garden areas. Consequently, children's health needs are very well met.

Social workers praise the staff in the home very highly. They say that when parents are given the opportunity to consider short breaks for their child, staff give parents and their children plenty of time to become accustomed to the idea of a short break, offering tea visits so that they can become familiar with the environment and activities. Other social workers say young people appear happy and smiling and comment on the space they have to play. If they love musical toys, there will always be a variety and favourites available when they visit. Parents also speak very highly of the care that their children receive. They say that the home is an 'Exceptional place, that is always developing and providing more for our children.'

The home is within walking distance to the centre of the town, which is well served by public transport. There are shops, a swimming pool and other facilities close by. It is very well maintained. Photographs and young people's fabulous art work personalise the home and make it look cosy and attractive. The layout is spacious and all on one level; there is a main lounge, a quiet room, a newly equipped sound and sensory room and large dining room. Outside there is a lovely garden with different areas for play, and equipment for young people with differing mobility needs. The latest addition is a superb playground with a soft play surface to keep young people safe.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

There are comprehensive risk assessments for each young person, risk assessments are undertaken for every outing and there are risk assessments for the home. Staff carefully monitor young people in the home and when out in the community; this keeps them safe. Young people never go missing due to the high staffing levels and good strategies in place. Staff are vigilant to ensure that young people do not harm themselves or others. However, on very rare occasions when incidents occur between children, staff and managers thoroughly investigate, risk assessments are revised and action plans are implemented to prevent any re-occurrence. Consequently, young people are protected and kept safe.

All staff receive safeguarding training and their practice and knowledge in this area are good. Staff are very clear about how they would deal with any issues of concern. Staff occasionally use physical intervention to prevent a young person from harming themselves or another. By responding quickly and knowing the young people well staff use minimum intervention on these rare occasions.

Staff work with schools, social workers, parents and other professionals to highlight simple targets for behaviour. These might be to sit at the table, or settle at night. By staff working consistently with others, young people's behaviour gradually improves over time and young people make progress given their starting points.

There is a well-established staff team who work well together, they know the young people and work consistently. There have been very few staff changes; the

recruitment and selection process is rigorous and comprehensive checks ensure that young people are cared for by appropriately qualified staff.

The manager has been tenacious in ensuring good maintenance provision is in place. Consequently the home is well maintained by an enthusiastic handy person and the necessary specialist services. Improvements regularly take place due to additional fundraising by the staff team. Services such as electricity, electrical appliances and fire fighting equipment are regularly checked by the appropriate professional companies. Monthly fire drills are carried out at different times of the day and evening and there are individual risk assessments for each young person with regard to evacuation in an emergency.

Leadership and management

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

The Registered Manager and her senior team are well established and highly respected by the staff team. The staff rota shows very high staffing levels which are tailored to meet the needs of the individual young people and the activities offered. Waking night staff ensure this high level of care is continued throughout the night, so that those who have medical needs or poor sleep patterns are well monitored.

All staff receive the mandatory training and specialist health care training pertinent to the care of the young people attending the home. In addition, staff are encouraged to explore specialist training, which they consider will be beneficial to the care of the young people. For example, communicating with young people with autism, and caring for children with high support needs. All staff are suitably qualified or working towards professional qualifications. The home is financially well resourced and staff actively fund raise to provide exciting additional opportunities for the young people such as a new play area.

Staff are very clear about their roles and talk excitedly about their additional projects, such as developing a newsletter for parents and developing the new playground. They say that they are very well supported in their roles and encouraged to express their ideas and views. This is one of the many strengths of this provision; the staff have a real sense of working in partnership. All staff receive regular supervision, this ensures training needs are met and staff are well supported. Team meetings are monthly and there are excellent opportunities for comprehensive team discussions, including training and progress updates. For example, the manager shares her monitoring observations, the team discuss the National Minimum Standards and also receive training such as learning Makaton signing.

The responsible individual carries out comprehensive monthly quality assurance monitoring visits under Regulation 33. The manager carries out comprehensive checks and reviews which comply with Regulation 34; these include an assessment of concerns about specific incidents and monitoring and identifying patterns and trends. These are used to inform further improvements and developments. The manager is always striving to improve and develop the provision to enhance the

short-break experience for young people and their families. For example, a comments book has been implemented for parents and visitors to record their views and staff are encouraged to share and discuss areas for improvement within their own supervision. The Statement of Purpose is currently under revision but the copy available does give a good overview of the home. It contains all the required information to give parents and the local authority clear information about the aims and objectives of the home and the facilities and services that are provided.

The home ensures that all significant events relating to the protection of young people are notified appropriately to the relevant authorities including the details of the immediate action taken following an incident. However, Ofsted is not always informed of the outcome of any investigation and the subsequent actions taken. This means that it is not possible to be assured that appropriate action has been taken to keep young people safe. Overall, the home is extremely competently well managed with robust systems in place. The senior management team have an excellent grasp of how the home is operating and of its strengths and weaknesses; there is a comprehensive development plan in place.

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.