

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Maria McGranaghan
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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.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: a service that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

Good: a service that exceeds minimum requirements

Satisfactory: a service that only meets minimum requirements

Inadequate: a service that does not meet minimum requirements

Service information

Brief description of the service

This local authority home provides a short-breaks service for up to six children and young people of either gender who are between the ages of 8 and 18 years and who have a permanent and substantial disability.

Overall effectiveness

The overall effectiveness is judged to be **outstanding**.

Young people stay for short breaks in a safe, caring and structured environment that supports them in making excellent progress in all aspects of their lives. Young people experiencing short break care are achieving excellent outcomes in education, healthy lifestyles, safety and emotional resilience and making a positive contribution within the community.

Young people benefit from exceptionally well planned and individualised short break care. Clear and detailed placement plans include essential information that ensures the young people are cared for consistently and in line with their individual needs. The committed staff team work well together and with internal and external agencies that help to support and guide young people. Consultation with young people and their families is highly promoted within the home. Staff actively seek the views of young people and their parents not only about their individual care, but about all aspects of life within the service.

Young people benefit from excellent relationships with staff. The high ratio of staff ensures that young people are afforded the care and attention they need in order to feel safe and secure. The home has a strong and stable staff team who receive excellent supervision and training to assist them in maintaining the already high standards of care. Staff have an excellent understanding of young people's needs and are consistent in offering a nurturing environment for young people to thrive and grow during their stay.

The home is effectively managed and the manager places a strong emphasis on providing a high standard of individualised child care practices promoting continuous improvement and development. Excellent internal and external monitoring systems ensure that all aspects of the home are closely scrutinised and the appropriate action taken to enhance performance within the home. The home responds responsibly to safety concerns and this ensures that young people's safety is effectively assessed and managed in the home.

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people are supported to make excellent progress in their education, emotional resilience and their trust in staff who work at the home. Individual key-worker sessions enable young people to develop skills such as independence skills including cooking and shopping. This process includes regular consultation with young people and their parents about the care they receive. Families are actively encouraged to comment on the care of their child and make suggestions on what they would like to improve or change. Evidence of consultation clearly demonstrates mutual respect and a genuine regard for individuals needs and aspirations.

Young people are appropriately supported to develop skills in areas of personal hygiene, shopping and choosing clothes and personal requisites. They enjoy planning the menus and are developing skills in their understanding of healthy food and lifestyle. Staff encourage young people to take part in community activities, such as attendance at the play centre, swimming and attending the park. Additionally, group opportunities, including trips to the zoo and seaside, assist to promote healthy and active lifestyles.

Young people are encouraged to make friends in order to develop their social skills. As a result most young people have friends who also enjoy the short break service. One young person commented 'I have lots of friends here and sometimes we are silly together'. Young people benefit from a committed staff team that encourage social engagement on various levels.

When young people are not socialising they enjoy baking, arts and crafts and music and dance. Comparatively, young people bring a selection of personal toys to the home such as a favourite teddy bear, and this helps them to settle at bedtime. This person centred approach assists young people to develop a sense of self, and clearly demonstrates the full engagement of staff with young people on short break stays.

Young people benefit from effective and consistent health care that is supported by the home. The health care plan provides detailed information from birth to the present day and includes a summary of all services involved in the young people's lives. Risk assessments are in place where there are concerns about young people's health and this ensures that the appropriate action is taken should a young person's health deteriorate during their stay. This process, coupled with consistent liaison with families ensures that young people receive the right support and care their needs require.

Young people are supported to maintain their individual routine and attend school during their short break stay. Excellent communication methods ensure that any issues arising with young people are effectively transferred to both school and parents and this ensures excellent continuity of care. Young people are assisted to complete homework and are offered a wide range of learning tools including communication aids such as widgets, story boards and picture communication systems. Staff promote education offering time and commitment to young people enabling them to make consistent progress and gain the ability to recognise their own achievements.

Young people live with their parents and attend the home for planned short break stays. Staff maintain excellent communication with parents through three monthly reports, face to face meetings and telephone conversations. Parents are invited to comment on the care of their child through the home's consultation process. One parent said, 'they have saved my life, they are very special people'.

Staff encourage young people to develop independence skills in accordance with their developmental age and abilities and this does not deter from the nurturing environment young people thrive within. Individual tasks are identified for young people such as cooking, baking, facial cleansing, shopping and purchasing food for the home's menu. Young people's achievements are recognised and rewarded with certificates and an annual presentation ceremony. The focus on maximising individual potential helps young people to realise their own accomplishments and develop a clear sense of pride.

Quality of care

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

Young people thrive in a stable, nurturing and supportive short break environment. Staff demonstrate a clear commitment to young people and this is evident in the excellent relationships that are established. Young people and staff have appropriate banter and are clearly relaxed in each other's company.

Staff hold high aspirations for the young people. They are fully committed to ensuring young people have the best opportunities and can achieve their full potential. As a result, young people actively engage with staff and want to take part and achieve to their full potential. Young people's exceptional progress is well documented in their certificates of achievements including developing independent skills, completing homework and using their own initiative.

Young people have individual short break placement plans that are tailored to meet their individual needs. The exceptional plans perfectly encapsulate a picture of individual need and what steps are being taken to address them both consistently and appropriately. Consistent liaison with parents and external support agencies, ensure that staff receive the correct guidance to maximise the potential of young people. The shared care approach makes certain that young people receive the best care possible during their stay.

Young people's plans are regularly reviewed to ensure the care offered is effective in meeting individual need. Regular consultation with young people and parents ensures that the plan remains focussed, target lead and progressive recognising the achievements and emotional development of young people. A staff member said, 'we know our children really well. We know their personalities, their likes and dislikes and what they are able to achieve. We all want what is best for the young people and working with the families helps us to achieve this.'

Young people and their parents know how to complain. Information is provided in the young people's guide and organisation complaints documents, which are developed specifically for young people and their families. Information is also available around the home. Complaints are handled fairly and investigated thoroughly by the manager or external nominated person, although there have been no recent complaints to the home. The excellent relationships between staff, young people and parents assist them to discuss any matters of concern or even if they feel a little fed up. Keyworker sessions highlight the support young people are offered in order to work through issues in a safe and caring environment. A member of staff said, 'we know when young people are not feeling right, sometimes we use expression boards so they can tell us how they feel. We always give them a little more attention if they are feeling a little out of sorts and ensure the parents are informed'.

Young people's heritage is given high priority and is central to the day-to-day running of the home. Clear and detailed information highlighting young people's individual identity is recorded within their short term placement plan and is recognised as a central part of their individual care. Both the staff team and young people encompass a range of cultural and religious difference and this helps to support all young people to understand their diverse nation. The home has a range

of books and information packs on the matters of diversity and young people have developed a large collage displayed in the home identifying 'what is diversity'. Similarly the home offers an array of international cuisine for the young people to try either in the home or in restaurants as a group activity. This practice supports young people's on going social engagement development while offering opportunities to try different tastes and textures outside of the home.

Staff have an excellent knowledge of the young people who come to stay at the home and recognise their individual triggers. Staff have developed strategies in order to recognise and manage specific triggers effectively and this includes the management of unacceptable behaviour. Excellent use of re-direction and de-escalation techniques assist the young person to relax and refocus. The techniques are shared with parents and this assist in the continuity of behaviour management. The home operates a zero sanction approach. Keyworker sessions assist young people to address specific behaviour and this is complemented by the consistent team work within the home.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Staff undertake child protection training in order that they are able to respond appropriately to allegations or suspicions of abuse. Risk assessments are in place and encapsulate individual risk factors for young people. A regular review of risk assessments takes place with young people and their parents having a direct input in developing this. This process enables them to see where risk is reduced or escalated and assists in evaluating the methods used to reduce any potential risk. This is an excellent tool that assists young people and their families to both understand and begin to appropriately manage personal risk.

Staff confirm that bullying is not tolerated within the home. Young people are assisted to understand the impact of bullying through regular key work and group sessions and are offered opportunities to explore situations where they may experience bullying and how to manage this. Staff are vigilant and closely monitor young people promoting positive relationships and appropriate behaviour. As a result records indicate that there have been no episodes of bullying in the home.

Young people benefit from a high staff ratio that ensures their personal safety is consistently maintained. As a result there have been no young people missing from the home. A staff member said, 'all young people have risk assessments and we work with the young people to reduce all risks. Young people don't go missing we always make sure they are safe. We have a protocol and have received training but we all understand the vulnerabilities of the young people and their safety is of paramount importance'.

Young people are encouraged to demonstrate socially acceptable behaviour. Methods such as role modelling and reframing behaviour have proved successful. Likewise young people benefit from regular keyworker sessions. This work helps young people understand their behaviour and assists them to make positive changes. As a result there are no sanctions in the home.

Behaviour is managed individually and care is taken to recognise young people's emotional balance and therefore behaviour is managed in a caring and supportive way. Staff focus on de-escalation and re-direction techniques and engage with young people in order to assist them work through their anger and frustration. As a result there has been no physical intervention since the last inspection. Regular consultation with parents offers complete transparency in the behaviour management process. This practice supports young people to understand the impact of their behaviour on themselves and others and offers excellent opportunities for joint working with families.

The physical environment is safe and secure. Staff promote the young people's protection by undertaking regular fire drill, service tests and making sure that all faults are efficiently addressed. Clear evidence highlights stringent monitoring of all systems within the home including the appropriate booking in and out, storage, administration and recording of medication.

Staff are vigilant when managing visitors and take appropriate steps to verify visitor's identity to protect the young people. The Statement of Purpose includes a glossary

of staff presently employed within the home and is complemented by a list of individual qualifications. Furthermore, the recruitment and selection of staff working in the home is thorough ensuring the continued protection of the young people.

Leadership and management

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

Young people receive short breaks in a home that is effectively and efficiently managed in their best interests. The home meets the aims and objectives of its Statement of Purpose, and young people, families and social workers are clear about the services and support the home provides.

The manager and staff clearly demonstrate a strong commitment to delivering exceptional child care practice tailored to the individual and personal needs of the young people they look after. The effectiveness of this approach is evident in the excellent progress young people have made in recent months in many aspects of their lives, including school attendance and educational achievement, independence and social integration.

The manager has a clear and realistic understanding of the strengths of the service and areas for further development based on strong evidence. The manager makes very good use of reflective practice ensuring excellent communication and consultation with the young people, parents, staff and social workers.

The manager provides excellent monitoring of the quality of care to improve the services provided to young people enhancing positive outcomes. The home shows a capacity for sustained improvement based on its performance over the last two years and the progress young people have made since the last inspection.

The external monitoring of the home is thorough. Evidence indicates clear lines of enquiry and focus based reporting. The manager is effective in demonstrating efficient responses to areas for development.

Staff are very well-supported by the manager. They have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities, and the high expectations for providing excellent child care practice. They confirm that when they need support and guidance, the manager is always available and they receive one-to-one supervision consistently. A staff member said, 'we are all very clear on our roles and the manager make sure we are all doing our best for the young people and this helps all staff to be consistent in our work'. Furthermore, team meetings take place every month, to allow the whole staff team to discuss the running of the home and to look at ways to improve the service they offer, to reflect on young people's progress and how best to support them.

Young people are looked after by a highly competent staff team who have a wide range of skills and experience. The skills within the team match the needs of young people coming to stay very well. The numbers of staff on duty are sufficient to meet the needs of young people in the best possible way. Staff access a comprehensive training programme that covers the needs of young people and provides staff with the skills and knowledge to effectively do their work.

The home's written records are securely stored and provide a comprehensive picture of individual young people's needs, development and progress. Young people's records contain up-to-date information about them, including the relevant documents from placing authorities.

The recommendation made at the last inspection has been effectively addressed. Specifically, the format for recording physical interventions has been revised in line with the new national minimum standards.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.