

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Helen Walker
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This local authority home provides short break care for up to five young people at any one time, who have a range of disabilities.

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 **good**.

Overall the home provides high quality, short break care and the outcomes for young people are very positive. As this is a short break service the young people's parents or main carers retain direct responsibility for their health and education. However, there is an extremely good working partnership between staff and professionals, such as, those in education and health. Therefore, young people benefit from care which takes account of their individual needs. The social work team, for children with disabilities, now have an office base at the home. This means the team are easily accessible to parents and staff in relation to advice and support for the young people who use this service.

Staff are enthusiastic, skilful and caring in their work with young people. Therefore, young people are keen to spend time at the home. Young people really enjoy their stay and are involved and encouraged to participate in a wide range of leisure activities. Parents and social work professionals consider young people are very well looked after and are kept safe during their stay. Staff have a clear understanding of their safeguarding responsibilities and young people confirm they feel safe at the home.

The manager provides effective management of the home and continues to improve outcomes for young people. This is supported by the home's comprehensive monitoring systems and development plan which help to ensure good standards are maintained.

Three recommendations have been made as a result of this inspection. These relate

to the use of casual staff, the manager's additional duties and the home environment.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the service should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure a homely environment is provided in relation to young people's bedrooms. Also that there are suitable storage facilities for equipment in the home (NMS 10.3)
- ensure managers are clear about their roles and responsibilities, in particular the impact of other duties additional to their role as Registered Manager (NMS 21.4)
- ensure every effort is made to achieve continuity of staffing; in particular that casual staff are not routinely used to overcome staff shortages. (NMS 17.8)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people make good progress and their individual needs are well met. Staff ensure young people's preferences for activities and routines in the home are sought. This means young people have the opportunity to choose how they spend their time in a structured yet relaxed home environment. Many activities are based in the community and enable young people to mix with their peers. For example, trips to the swimming baths and meals in a local café. Some young people asked for particular events such as 'girl only' weekends. Staff listened and considered young people's views and the group mix. This type of event now occurs which helps promote their self-esteem and confidence.

Young people are excited about spending time at the home and talk enthusiastically about their stay. A parent said, 'It's great; my child really looks forward to being here'. Another parent talked about the benefits for their family as well as their child, they said, 'My child coming here gives us a break'. They also said, 'My child didn't socialise before coming here and they do all sorts of things with them now'. Staff provide care that is very much appreciated by young people and their families.

Staff promote young people's good health. Young people using this service live with their parents or main carers who retain overall responsibility for their child's health care needs. Young people have different levels of health needs, some of which are complex. Staff understand and work to young people's individual care plans and are trained and experienced to manage their day-to-day health needs.

Parents or main carers also retain overall responsibility for the educational needs of their child. The home maintains strong, positive working relationships with schools.

This includes inviting teaching staff to visit the home to interact with the young people. Care staff are proactive to visit schools and link with teachers to ensure a consistent level of care is given both at school and the home.

Young people's cultural, religious and dietary needs are known and well-regarded. A parent says their child's cultural and religious needs relating to their diet are respected and appropriate meals are provided. Young people are encouraged to eat healthily and have the opportunity to choose their meals.

Quality of care

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

Young people using this service have varying degrees of ability and individual communication needs. They benefit from positive relationships with staff. The staff actively involve and encourage young people to participate in a wide range of activities and the routines of the home. They are familiar with young people's specific needs and enable them to have a voice and be heard. For all young people, this includes consultation about their care and their wishes. Additionally, the staff have helped to develop a 'personal communication passport' for some young people. This is a practical and person-centred approach to passing on key information about a child.

Young people said they have fun going on shopping trips with staff, baking cakes and buns as well as playing in the large well-equipped garden at the home. A touch-screen, interactive computer enables young people to use this for leisure and educational purposes. A parent said their child, 'enjoys all the activities and they look forward to staying'. Professionals involved with the young people said they feel the staff have the experience and expertise to care for the young people. They also said staff give young people lots of stimulation and promote interaction with their peers.

Staff receive appropriate training in regard to the storage and administration of medication. This helps to ensure medication is administered by competent staff. There are robust arrangements to record medication brought in to the home and taken off the site so that this is properly accounted for.

Young people have placement plans specific to their individual needs which outline how their needs are to be met during their stay at the home. The development and use of 'short break' care plans assist staff to support young people to achieve positive outcomes. Staff are familiar with and follow young people's positive behaviour management strategies, including risk assessments. This is up-to-date information about young people's current needs helps to ensure young people are cared for properly.

Staff have strong links with a range of professionals, such as, those in health and education. They receive training to help them meet the health needs of young people, for example, gastro feeding and epilepsy awareness. The manager actively seeks out suitable health promotion material for young people so that they are well-

informed about keeping fit and healthy. A parent said that staff always take account of their child's diet and ensure food is culturally appropriate.

Staff positively develop young people's social inclusion in the wider community. This includes trips out to places of interest and visits to sporting games. Young people said they especially like their visits to ice hockey games. A large enclosed garden provides a safe play area for young people. There is a range of substantial and specialist outdoor play equipment available which is well used and enjoyed by the young people.

The home is situated in a pleasant residential area. It is spacious, comfortably furnished and well maintained. There are appropriate aids and adaptations in the home for the benefit of the young people. However, there is limited storage space in the home for items such as craft and play equipment to be appropriately stored. The corridors and communal rooms are welcoming with photographs and pictures on the walls. This is in contrast to individual bedrooms which have a neutral décor and little personalisation. Additionally, some bedroom carpets retain an unpleasant odour.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people benefit from staff who are aware of child protection and familiar with the home's safeguarding procedures. This supports staff to protect the young people who use this service. Staff say they are confident to raise any concerns with the relevant authorities. Young people say they feel safe in the home and parents say their child is kept 'one hundred percent safe' during their stay.

Good behaviour management strategies and risk assessments assist staff to promote an environment where physical intervention and sanctions are rarely used. Staff training enables them to manage challenging behaviour in a positive way. There are no reports of bullying and none of the young people missing from the home. Staff's approach helps to ensure young people are looked after safely and securely.

Staff have training to help them recognise and support young people who put themselves at risk. There are effective links with local safeguarding teams. This includes work with a local multi-agency team to promote young people's welfare, including managing risks in the community.

Young people benefit from staying in premises that are maintained in a safe condition. Regular health and safety checks are undertaken and equipment is routinely serviced. This promotes a safe home environment. Staff are familiar with fire evacuation procedures and know the action to take in the event of a fire in the home.

The home has a robust recruitment and employment procedure. This helps to ensure young people are looked after by suitable staff and are protected from potential abuse.

Leadership and management

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

The manager provides effective and competent leadership of this home. There were no requirements or recommendations for improvement made at the last inspection that required follow-up.

As well as managing this home, they also manage another children's home operated by this authority. This has no significant negative impact on her ability to manage this home properly. However, the manager has a substantial role to develop this service and its associated non-residential facilities such as the youth club, siblings group and gardening group. Although the home is well-run, the manager has additional non-residential duties which may have future impact on the effective management of the home.

Young people benefit from care given by an enthusiastic and friendly staff team. The team have a good understanding of young people's individual needs and of how these are to be met during their stay at the home. Staffing levels are adequate but are routinely supplemented by the use of casual staff which does not always provide consistency of care. The manager has a good overview of the staffing position and is mindful to promote consistency with the use of experienced casual staff. The staff shift handovers are informative and enable staff to be aware of young people's changing care needs.

Young people were seen to be very happy and comfortable with staff. Staff are attentive and enthusiastic in their work. They want the best for young people and seek out opportunities to enable them to access and experience enjoyable activities as available to other young people. Staff are aware to have young people with similar needs and abilities staying at the home on the same night. This is managed through careful consideration of assessments, the involvement of young people, parents and professionals. A parent said 'staff are really good and I can contact them anytime' and 'it's been great to have this kind of service'.

Staff receive formal supervision from management which covers their professional development and the care of young people. They have access to a wide range of training to equip them with skills to care for young people's more specific needs. The majority of staff are appropriately qualified or working towards a relevant qualification to support them in their work with the young people.

The manager has a development plan for the home which shows the strengths and areas for improvement in the service. This means opportunities to enhance the quality of care and outcomes for young people are recognised. The home keeps appropriate records relating to the care and welfare of young people who use this short break service. The records are well maintained and stored securely.

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.