

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Natalie Burton
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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 service is registered to provide short breaks for four young people who have a learning difficulty. A local authority owns and operates this setting.

Overall effectiveness

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

This is an outstanding service that positively impacts on young people's lives. Young people make exceptional progress in a number of key areas, notably social skills, communication skills and accessing the community. The key strengths of the service are the staff and the effective management. Staff are enthusiastic, trained to a high standard, actively seek the views of young people and understand the complex needs of young people well. The effectiveness with which the home provides personalised care is excellent and takes full account of the individual needs of each young person, while promoting significant outcomes. There are strong relationships between young people, parents and staff; this ensures there is effective support to enable young people to develop socially and emotionally.

There is one shortfall. This relates to one area of recording. This has minimal impact on outcomes for young people.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure information about the child is recoded clearly and in a way which will be helpful to the child when they access their files now or in the future. (NMS 22.5)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people achieve positive outcomes and are provided with high quality care within a warm, caring and nurturing environment. Staff have extensive knowledge and understanding of the complex individual needs of young people in their care, which enables excellent tailored responses to individual young people. Staff support young people to make outstanding progress based on their assessed abilities and needs, for example, in social skills, communication and self care skills. Two social

workers reported 'all goals set for young people to reach are met'. This is supported by a parent who said, their child has made significant progress in 'gaining independence out of the family home' and 'always now has breakfast, but before he went there he would never eat it'. Young people equally recognise their achievements, however small, and receive positive recognition, which promotes expectations and positive behaviour.

Young people grow in confidence and develop good emotional resilience because they are treated with respect, have their needs clearly assessed, and their individuality facilitated and celebrated. Young people enjoy engaging in meaningful relationships with staff. These strong and positive attachments are demonstrated by how positively young people interacted with staff.

Staff work unwaveringly to support young people to make choices. For example, during the inspection, staff meticulously worked with a young person to interact and stimulate with various choices of activities, such as making a Christmas stocking, accessing the outdoor space and reading a book. Young people enjoy good health and healthy lifestyles. Close working arrangements with parents, social workers and external agencies ensure strategies to manage health needs are current and agreed by all parties. Young people are cared for by staff who are vigilant to changes in their health and so take agreed actions to keep them as healthy as possible.

Young people feel valued because they are actively encouraged to express their views, feelings and wishes. They are consulted on the recruitment of staff to work at the home, about their stay at the home, activities and the food they would like to eat. Young people benefit from effective communication between the staff and families. One parent commented that 'we can't speak highly enough of them'.

Young people make significant progress in their self-care skills, so increasing their independence. For example, staff use 'now and next cards' to help young people prepare for bedtime, complete appropriate daily chores and going shopping. Young people take part in activities and interests and are encouraged to undertake more opportunities.

Quality of care

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

Young people enjoy positive and respectful relationships with staff and each other. They are looked after by a motivated, dedicated and well trained staff team. As such young people benefit from long term relationships and attachments to key people. Young people's needs are thoroughly understood and interpreted enabling staff to respond to any discomfort and anxiety promptly. From surveys completed in the home young people report 'I am very happy here' and 'I feel listened to'. Staff are vigilant to any changes and signs to ensure young people's health, safety and welfare is promoted. Their comprehensive understanding of young people's personal histories enables excellent responses to individual young people.

Young people are cared for and develop confidence in a stable and nurturing environment. One parent reported 'they are wonderful'. This was supported by a social worker who said 'there is no doubt that children are happy when they are there, whatever they are doing, they are doing it right'. Staff maintain positive relationships with young people while consistently implementing clear expectations and boundaries. Staff are dedicated and enthusiastic in encouraging young people to explore opportunities to develop self-confidence and achieve their full potential. These relationships are a key strength underpinning the significant outcomes for young people.

Young people are supported by staff that have a clear commitment to promoting diversity and equality. Staff have a comprehensive understanding of the individuality, social, cultural and religious backgrounds of young people. They seek to maximise the opportunities when young people can positively engage in activities to stimulate and broaden young people's horizons, for example, day trips out. Young people's personal care is sensitively managed to preserve dignity and afford privacy.

Staff practice is exceptionally child-centred and personalised. The manager and staff analyse each young person's needs and continually review the effectiveness of behaviour management strategies. Pre-survey questionnaires show that parents are regularly consulted about the care of their child, and two social workers said 'there is very good communication'. This ensures the views of the young person, their family and social worker are regularly sought on the care given. Placement plans support young people's emotional, behavioural and learning processes. Staff celebrate and share achievements to ensure young people receive positive recognition. Parents identify that young people have significantly progressed since accessing the service; they particularly praise the care and support young people receive. Two social workers and three parents all reported 'there is nothing they could do better'.

The home provides young people with excellent individual and communal accommodation. These areas provide a good standard of accommodation that young people can be proud of.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Safeguarding young people is a priority of the staff team and central to their practice. High levels of supervision both inside and outside the home recognise young people's significant vulnerability. Staff are proactive and safeguarding strategies include and engage young people so there are significant improvements in their behaviour. For example, in interacting with peers, mealtimes, and accessing the community. Staff receive regular training in safeguarding. They demonstrate a good understanding of the action to take should they have any concerns about a young person's safety or well-being.

Practice is informed by clearly assessed risks which balance minimising risks without

impeding young people's independence. As a result, young people are not unnecessarily restricted when accessing the community and activities. The quality of relationships between staff and young people is outstanding and reinforces the very caring atmosphere that can be witnessed throughout the home. Young people are assisted to develop appropriate behaviour through the home's behaviour management policy and strategies. Staff are comfortable with their role of setting clear understood boundaries while maintaining a high quality of relationship between themselves and young people.

Young people are informed of their rights through a choice of formats such as verbal, large print and Makaton. This ensures that young people can access the information they need. The service focuses on positive recognition and praise for young people for positive behaviour and achievements and staff are enthusiastic at seeing progress. This positive behavioural strategy means sanctions and physical interventions are rare.

The home is safe and well maintained. There are established systems and structures to maintain safe practices and fulfil health and safety obligations, ensuring the home is fully informed of potential hazards in order to reduce risks. Regular checks to the fire system ensures due care is taken in maintaining a safe environment, and all young people are involved in regular fire drills. There are robust, safe recruitment procedures within the home.

Leadership and management

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

An excellent Statement of Purpose outlines the aims and objectives of the service. The home is operating in line with this statement and the principles are understood by interested parties. Young people benefit from a consistent, enthusiastic and committed staff team that focuses on their needs and welfare. As a result young people's progress is clearly evident and noted by local authorities who use the service.

Staff feel very well supported, supervised and involved in making decisions. Staff report development and training opportunities are available and varied to progress their careers. The manager and staff team are very well qualified and sufficient in number to meet the needs of young people. Regular meetings, supervisions and appraisals ensure practice improves further and the focus remains on young people's needs and development.

A comprehensive development plan outlines the aims and objectives for the year with clear reviews to chart progress. Key documents, policies and procedures are regularly revisited to ensure practice is current, relevant to young people's needs and accountable.

An exceptional level of monitoring young people's care and experiences ensures practice is safe and the quality of care remains consistently high. Independent visits

contribute further to reflective practice and driving improvement. Young people and parents are consistently consulted about the care received and therefore young people settle in the home. There were no requirements or recommendations made at the last inspection. Young people's records are well structured and are held securely and confidentially. However, some records, such as incident sheets are not clearly recorded. Whilst this has minimal impact on the outcomes and quality of care for young people, this does not fully ensure that information will be helpful to the young person when they access their files now or in the future.

Equality and diversity practice is **outstanding**.