

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Michael Williams
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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 operated by a county council and registered to provide overnight short breaks and respite care for up to six children aged nine to 17 years old. Young people using this service have additional needs which may include a physical disability. This home provides services to support the child and family and enable them to live together within the community.

Overall effectiveness

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

Overall the home provides a good service to young people. The quality of care provided is good and outcomes for young people are also good, as is the safety of young people and the promotion of equality and diversity. The leadership and management is also good.

Assisted by a member of staff, one young person commented that: the staff are great or good; the care is great; the activities are great; and the home is great to okay. One young person's parent commented that the home 'is much more user friendly' since it moved location and that their child 'is very happy there most of the time'. Another parent commented that what is good about the home is 'Understanding and accepting my child and his needs'. A placing social worker commented very positively about each of the areas inspected and specifically commented on: the inclusive, community-based activities for young people; the comfortable and safe environment; the development of young people's communication and independence skills; and the consistency of care the staff provide.

The home provides young people with very individualised care that consistently takes into account the views that they communicate about their care and support and the views of their family, social workers and independent reviewing officers. The staff team and the young people staying at the home enjoy good relationships with each other.

An area for improvement is the arrangements for child protection in the home's Statement of Purpose.

Areas for improvementStatutory Requirements

This section sets out the actions which must be taken so that the registered person/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the

National Minimum Standards. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Reg.	Requirement	Due date
5 (2001)	ensure the home's Statement of Purpose is revised to include the current arrangements made for child protection. (Regulation 5)	16/12/2011

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people make good progress to develop a positive self view, emotional resilience and knowledge and understanding of their background. This is achieved by the personalised care each young person receives, that promotes all aspects of their individual identity. The home has current short break care plans for each young person. They include personal information and assessments, targets that are specific, measurable and achievable (SMART), and behaviour management strategies. They are devised by the young person's key worker in consultation with the young person, their parents and social worker.

Young people live in a healthy environment where all of their health needs are very well promoted and they are able to access the services they need to meet them. Daily staff handovers cover the health and medication needs of each young person receiving a residential short break at the home. The review of young people's care includes the review of their health needs, in collaboration with the mainstream and specialist health services also working with them. The rolling menu that staff follow is varied and is guided by both healthy eating and young people's choices. The home has robust procedures for checking in and administering young people's medication. During this inspection, these procedures identified that one young person had arrived at the home from their school without some of their prescribed medication. One parent commented 'They are very on the ball with new meds etc.'

Young people are very well supported to achieve their educational potential. Most young people arrive at the home from school and leave the home for school. Staff at the home support young people's attendance at their schools and maintain regular contact with them, for example, through school visits. Young people's key workers at the home and their school teachers both participate in their multi-agency reviews. During this inspection, the home immediately liaised with one young person's school to track down their missing medication.

Young people are actively and positively involved in activities in the community. One parent commented that their child can 'do lots of activities that he enjoys' at the home. A placing social worker commented that the opportunity to interact with their peers and to take part in inclusive activities in the community were two of the positive outcomes from their young people's short breaks at the home. Since the last inspection, the home's Registered Manager had effectively addressed one parent's

concern about the amount of activities their child does whilst at the home.

Young people receive positive care which promotes their independence. The above placing social worker commented that developing independence skills was another of the positive outcomes from their young people's short breaks at the home. Staff support young people, appropriate to their age and understanding, to develop practical skills. For example, one young person's SMART target is for them to take part in the preparation of at least one item for the evening meal. When required, the home actively supports young people's transition to adult services.

Quality of care

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

The views and wishes of young people are taken into account in the running of the home and the delivery of their care. The home periodically holds young people's meetings as 'a way of finding out what young people think of the services they receive'. Young people's personal information includes personal considerations such as their language and communication. The inspector observed that a residential support worker (RSW) and a young person with speech difficulties who they were working with were able to communicate with each other.

Staff at the home ensure that their contribution to short break care plans is tailored to the individual young person and involves the young person, as appropriate to their age and understanding. Each young person's care plan is monitored by their key worker at the home, who consults them about it when it is reviewed, and ensures that their views are taken into account at their review meetings. When young people's communication difficulties are such that they cannot be effectively consulted, this is then carried out with their parents on their behalf.

Staff implement positive behaviour strategies to support young people in developing skills in managing conflict and developing positive relationships. Young people's case records include their behaviour management plan. These use a traffic light system to classify their different behaviours and a suitable method for handling unwanted behaviour. Staff training in an approved method to de-escalate confrontations or potentially violent behaviour is regularly refreshed.

Staff actively promote the welfare of young people staying at the home. One young person circled 'yes' in answer to the question 'do you feel safe at the home'. One parent commented that 'It is a safe place', and a placing social worker commented on the thoroughness of behaviour management plans and risk assessments for their young people at the home. The home risk assesses the various activities young people take part in and implements effective measures to minimise identified risks. One such measure is very close or one-to-one staff supervision, a safeguard that is in place for many of the young people staying at the home.

Staff positively address any barriers to young people's educational progress and achievement. For example, during this inspection one young person's key worker

was in the process of liaising with all the other parties involved to determine whether they were now able to cope with a full day at school, or still needed to leave before the commotion of the end of the school day.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Short break care plans clearly identify risks and protective factors for individual young people. Each young person's case record includes an analysis of risk and risk assessments for their various activities. Staff at the home implement effective measures to minimise identified risks and regularly monitor and review these measures. For example, in July 2011 the analysis of risk for one young person was: 'Due to the nature of [the young person's] disability he can present as a risk to himself and others. As a result he needs very close supervision and cannot be left alone.' The inspector saw that this level of supervision was in place for the individual concerned.

Effective protection for young people is provided. The home's child protection procedures are consistent with those of their Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) and staff have received safeguarding training since the last inspection. The home's child protection procedures refer staff to the latest LSCB on-line procedures, but also include a paper copy of their information on 'What to do if you are worried a child is being abused' and on the child protection process, from a 'Professional has concerns' to 'Making a referral to children's social care'.

Staff at the home are proactive in promoting positive behaviour and relationships. One young person's behaviour management plan said that 'Currently there are no sanctions appropriate to use with [the young person] in order to encourage positive behaviour'. Since the last inspection, staff at the home have only used sanctions and restraint with young people on a few occasions, and its use has been recorded as required. Nobody identified bullying as a problem at the home. One young person circled 'no' in answer to the question 'do you get bullied or picked on', after the member of staff assisting them explained that bullying means being mean or not nice to others.

Since the last inspection, on one occasion one young person has gone missing from staff at the home, during a group trip to their local supermarket. However, they were missing for less than an hour and were protected as far as possible by the protocol the home has with the police regarding missing children.

There is very careful selection and vetting of all staff working with young people in the home, to help prevent unsuitable people from having the opportunity to harm them. Staff do not normally start work at the home until all the checks required in the Children's Homes Regulations 2001 are completed. However, at the time of this inspection, staff who had been working for a national children's charity had recently started work at the home. They had been working at a nearby residential short breaks children's home that the county council had taken over as part of finalising

young people's transition to their services. These staff had therefore transferred to the council's employment under transfer of undertakings protection of employment arrangements. As a result of these exceptional circumstances, the home's head of service had authorised the business case, including a risk assessment, for these staff to commence work at the home before the council had completed their checks on them. These staff were therefore able to continue working with the young people whose residential short breaks had already transferred to the home.

Young people stay in a very safe home that provides them with a very suitable physical environment. Since their last inspection, in May 2010, the home has moved to council premises in another part of the county. They started operating from these premises in October 2010. One parent commented that 'It is a safe and pleasant environment', and another that 'The area is nice, with nice places to visit'. Checks on the safety of the home are up-to-date and subject to regular monitoring.

Leadership and management

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

The home has a clear Statement of Purpose, to make the aims and objectives of the home and the services and facilities it provides clear to staff, placing social workers and young people's parents. It includes all of the matters required. However, the arrangements for child protection refer to old Area Child Protection Committee arrangements, and not the current LSCB arrangements the home follows.

Staff numbers, experience and support are such that they sufficiently meet the needs of the young people. One parent commented 'The staff are really friendly' and another said 'I think the staff are very caring to [my child]'. The staff team and their relevant qualifications and experience are included in the home's Statement of Purpose. The home has been operating with a minor shortfall in staff numbers that the incoming staff will address to ensure that the deployment of staff on individual shifts will always meet the individual needs of all young people on short breaks at the home. Since the last inspection, staff have participated in a range of training to be able to continue to meet young people's needs, for example, in terms of their health and safety. The Registered Manager, a shift leader and a RSW each spoke positively about arrangements for supervision, which are included in the home's Statement of Purpose. There it states that 'All staff receive 4 weekly formal supervision' and supervisors were working to meet this following the end of the school summer holiday. Regular staff team meetings are also a support for staff.

The home's Registered Manager, senior practitioner and three shift leaders have the skills, experience and qualifications to exercise effective leadership of the home's staff and operation and ensure the delivery of good quality care that meets the individual needs of each young person on a short break at the home. A placing social worker commented that they and the staff at the home 'work well together' to meet their young people's needs.

The home is part of a wider county council service for children and young people

with disabilities. In August 2011, the Registered Manager completed a council business continuity management document for the home. They had also completed a team action plan for the home that was being followed, addressing team purpose, delivering outcomes and improving performance. To secure future improvement, the home had soundly addressed both the requirements and the recommendations its previous inspection had reported.

Regular and sound procedures for monitoring the operation of the home contribute to maintaining the good quality of the provision and promoting the welfare of the young people. Monthly internal and external monitoring is carried out respectively by the Registered Manager and registered provider visitors. The latter's reports include any issues arising from interviews with young people or staff and any action recommended.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.