

Inspection report for children's home

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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

The home, or the project, as it is commonly known, is a short-break scheme offering respite care for children and young people with learning difficulties. Some have physical or multiple disabilities. The project currently provides for a total of 36 children, male and female, aged from five years to under 18 years, but accommodates no more than a maximum of four, exceptionally five, at any one time.

The home is operated by an independent provider in partnership with a local authority from whose area all the children and young people come.

Overall effectiveness

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

The home provides an exceptional package of individual care to the young people it accommodates. Young people are provided with clear and comprehensive short breaks and the home works closely with the local authority disabilities team and also parents to provide a holistic provision of service. Young people are encouraged to achieve, and positive outcomes are promoted. As a result young people experience and enjoy full life experiences and are helped to develop to their full potential.

The manager and staff are highly motivated to provide access to a full range of activities and experiences which enhances young people's confidence and functioning capacity. They excel at ensuring young people and their parents are actively involved in the planning and functioning of the home and the care provided. Families view the home as a family support, 'we would not be the family we are today without you.' Young people are well protected and robust systems are in place, which mean safeguarding is at the forefront of practice. Staff are highly trained which enables them to manage any challenging behaviour in a positive manner. This ensures a consistency and quality of care which enables young people to grow and be more confident.

There are no recommendations or requirements from this inspection.

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people are provided with an exceptional high quality provision of short breaks. Care packages are individually tailored to meet the needs of the young people and meticulous care is given to the planning of placements at the home. This means that when young people receive a short break, it offers the optimum provision of care for them and ensures their stay is a quality one. A social worker commented that staff

'work hard to make sure a young person is in with a group he gets on with'.

The staff work closely with the local authority disabilities team, which is responsible for all referrals, and health care professionals. The manager has been persistent in her efforts to maintain close links with parents. As a result, parents feel extremely well involved in the planning and provision of young people's care. One parent commented, 'who best to involve than us the parents.' This parental involvement has led to improvements of home to parent contact and this has ensured care is more consistent.

The respite nature of placements means that young people's families and carers retain primary decision making responsibility in respect of their health care, education and arrangements for any adult care needed. However, the manager has begun work with transition workers to promote a continuum of care through to adult provision. Good contact is maintained with schools and key workers visit each young person's school and attend reviews. School to home diaries are kept and this ensures that young people's educational attendance is well promoted while they are away from their own homes.

The importance of the safe management of medication is treated with the utmost diligence and parents have confidence that the health needs of their child are prioritised. All staff are suitably trained in health and first aid and are able to deal with the sometimes complex needs of the young people.

While receiving short breaks at the home, young people are encouraged to participate in a wide range of activities. These activities include trips to farms, Mc Donald's, seaside, garden centres, horse riding, fireworks, Snowdome, swimming pool, to name a few. The manager is recruiting volunteers so that when there are groups who have diverse needs each young person can attend an activity which is individual to them. This detailed thought to individual needs enables young people to experience activities which best suit their needs and encourages their personal development.

One social worker commented on a specific piece of work which clearly identifies the dedication to improving outcomes for young people. Difficulties around eating were addressed by introducing a young person to new food types, encouraging cooking and helping the young person feel comfortable around food. This reinforced work being done at home and helped parents manage a situation. The social worker commented that this type of work often was 'better than being done by the parents because they are more anxious'. Staff are consistently supportive in such work and as a result young people receiving this service thrive and have aims to achieve their full potential.

Families are happy to use the service and with the standard of care young people receive. They believe it to be nurturing and safe, and that there is a great parallel between home and there.

Quality of care

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

The home accommodates young people with a high level of learning and physical disability. A top priority is given to providing excellent and individualised care. The care offered to young people is consistently reviewed and changes to the physical resources available to the young people are made to best meet their current needs. For example, a games room which was suitable for an older group of young people is to be altered into a sensory room as this best meets the specific needs of the majority of young people currently receiving short breaks. This forward thinking versatility enables staff to provide a tailored service to young people and ensures young people grow and develop from different experiences.

Young people and their parents are encouraged to play a very active role in the running of this home and in their packages of care. The planning of placements to the home is detailed and extensive. Considerable effort is made for ensuring that all relevant information is available in providing a quality short break service. One of the strengths of this provision is the exceedingly high quality parental contact with the care provision. Parents retain close contact with the home and this assists in the stay being a positive one. A parents' consultative group is flourishing and parents feel this is helping them to understand the nature of the service offered and the reasons for some decisions about their child's care.

Staff are adept at utilising different forms of communication. Observation of staff with young people showed they were highly motivated in their efforts to understand the needs of individuals and promote their ability to choose. The manager promotes the view that 'behaviour should be seen as communication' and staff work consistently to understand this. This benefits the young people who experience a calm, managed care which alleviates the need for any type of physical behaviour management.

The varying and sometimes complex needs of the young people mean that they are not always able to utilise complaints systems. However, there is an excellent pictorial guide to the home which clearly shows young people how to complain if they need to. The manager ensures that at all times the needs and wishes of the young people are taken into account. On a daily basis, each young person fills in, or is assisted to fill in a sheet about their day. Any concerns mentioned here are dealt with speedily by the manager. For example one young person commented that the bedding in her room was too young for her. On the next short break visit the young person was taken out shopping to buy more age appropriate bedding of her choice. This clearly shows that there is a very real intention to facilitate full and proper participation of the young people in their own care.

The home is very well presented and clean. Attention is taken with the decorating of the rooms and each has an individual theme. Young people are able to make their room as individual as possible and efforts are made to ensure that they utilise the same themed room each time they stay. One young person was experiencing difficulties sleeping on the beds in the home as they were too high so another

adaptable bed was purchased. This attention to detail clearly has an impact on the outcomes of the stay for the young people and encourages them to gain maximum benefit from it. There is a garden which allows young people to explore the outside world but there are plans to adapt this to better suit the needs of the young people. Young people have access to games and music and a wide variety of activities. Staff are extremely conscious of the vulnerability of the young people in their care and great care is taken with doors and windows. Staff supervision is such that young people are not left unsupervised and this further promotes their sense of safe care.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people at this home are safe and feel well cared for. Their parents believe that they are safe and that if there are any concerns staff would know how to deal with it. There are very clear policies in place which ensure that staff are aware of procedures to be followed in the event of a safeguarding issue. Care planning is extremely comprehensive and individualised. A robust focus on risk assessment recognises the vulnerability of the young people accommodated at the home and reflects how their safety is highly prioritised during their stay.

Staff feel that young people do not generally display challenging behaviour and that if they do, clear care planning and behaviour management keeps this to a minimum. All staff talked about young people displaying challenging behaviour as a means of communication. The manager has been innovative in her plans to manage any challenging behaviour, by specific arrangements of the groups of young people having breaks, and by staff training and activities. As a result there is a noticeable reduction of any restraint or measures of control. Young people are not restrained in this home although all staff are trained in appropriate techniques. The manager ensures that all training is up to date, but stresses the importance of diffusion rather than physical intervention. There is a high staffing ratio and young people receive considerable individual focus during their stay. There have only been two instances of sanctions being imposed, and there are no instances of young people being absent from the home.

The physical environment is safe and all appropriate checks in regard to health and safety are complete. Fire drills are carried out but this is done with consideration of the young people staying in the home. A young person's individual response to the sounding of a fire alarm is thoroughly assessed prior to any test. All staff however are fully conversant with their role in the event of a fire and thus are able to ensure the safety of the young people.

The provider organisation has sound recruitment procedures and staff are well vetted prior to appointment. Personnel files have details of references and questions asked at interview. Full personnel files are stored at the organisation's head office but the manager has ensured that there is a secondary file kept in the home which offers all necessary details regarding the recruitment process.

Leadership and management

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

This is an extremely well managed home which offers an excellent provision to young people with learning and physical disabilities. The manager and staff are highly motivated and dedicated to providing high quality care to young people. The manager and staff are also innovative in their efforts to offer stimulation and care.

Staff work hard to build relationships with parents and young people prior to the start of the short stay provision and a social worker commented, 'families are convinced their child's needs will be met'. The manager offers consistent and extensive monitoring which ensures this very high standard of care is sustained. As a result of this, young people feel happy and safe when living at the home and their families are confident that their children's care needs are fully met.

Staff feel well supported in their work and regular supervision, of a good quality, takes place. Staff training is a high priority, sometimes provided by the local authority or other external professionals, and this helps staff feel able to manage the complex needs of the young people in their care. The level of staff turnover is low and this is due, in part, to the enthusiasm and dedication of the management team. There is excellent communication between managers and staff which enables thorough discussion about the needs of the young people to take place.

The home is well maintained and the manager is consistent in her assessment of the resources available and ensures that changes are made to meet the needs of the young people. This ensures that the individual needs of young people are well catered for in the home. Even in the provision of bedroom furniture, such as specific beds for individual young people, the home clearly aims to ensure a high level of individual service.

The one recommendation from the previous inspection has been met and the bathroom has been improved.

Care planning is highly individual and one of the strengths of the manager and staff is their commitment to involving the young people and their parents in this planning. As a result of this, young people and parents truly experience shared care, with parents feeling able to maintain a clear role in the care their children receive. Young people's files are clear, with detailed behaviour plans and thorough risk assessments and targets for the young people to achieve during their stay. The high motivation of staff and their positive relationships with the young people, keep any behaviour issues to a minimum.

There is a rigorous monitoring procedure under regulation 33 which consistently challenges the manager to reflect upon practice in the home. The manager maintains a very practical and hands-on approach to her role but is also very clear in her monitoring of all work. She has been innovative in her work to involve parents in the

home and this has meant that parents better understand any limitations of care packages and the support offered. The manager strives to utilise information from monitoring for the outcomes of young people to be measured more effectively. This information is then used to modify and improve care packages.

Equality and diversity practice is **outstanding**.