

Inspection report for children's home

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<b>Inspector</b>	Angus Mackay
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<b>Provision subtype</b>	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

This children's home is a resource centre for children with disabilities and their families, which is owned and managed by the local district council. One of the services offered at the centre is residential short break care for children with a disability. It is this aspect of the centre's activity that is regulated under the Children's Homes Regulations 2001. The centre is registered for five young people between eight and 17 years who have a learning and/or physical disability; many of the children also present challenging behaviour. Other services offered include day care, after school care and outreach services.

### Overall effectiveness

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

The home is excellent at seeking the views of young people and incorporating them into the care plan. Staff use a variety of creative methods to allow young people to express their views and choices and accurate recording of observations to enhance this. Parents and social workers commend the very close working between the home, schools, and themselves to ensure a consistent service to young people.

Young people make excellent progress in health, diet, behaviour, education and social engagement with significant help from the home. Staff work very closely with other professionals to achieve this progress and parents talk about the sharing of information between all parties which helps to achieve this success.

Managers make excellent use of monitors; adjusting programmes, staffing levels or procedures to achieve positive outcomes for young people. Parents and social workers say staff are excellent at communicating with them ensuring young people's needs are central to their practice. Staff are good at addressing young people's cultural needs ensuring that parent's wishes are reflected in the care provided.

Staff encourage young people to make choices about activities and to be involved in a wide range of fun recreations outside the home. Staff design children's breaks around them and their personal choices whilst also meeting parental requests. For example, one young person does not wish to come to the home and is entertained in the community giving his parents the time they require.

Parents, social workers, health professionals and a visitor monitoring practice in line with Regulation 33 of the Children's Homes Regulations said that they had witnessed constant improvement in the home. Following this inspection there were no recommendations or requirements.

## Areas for improvement

### Outcomes for children and young people

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

Outcomes for young people enjoying the home are outstanding. Young people are enthusiastic about the home, get excited when they are due to come and enjoy excellent relationships with staff. One young person said that she likes everything about the home and enjoys coming there. Parents comment on the tremendous progress the young people make whilst at the home. One parent said 'my daughter initially went in on crisis placement and now her behaviour has really improved, staff were instrumental in turning it around.' Others comment on small but constant changes like the young person being able to butter toast or pour a drink which greatly improves the quality of their lives.

Young people achieve excellent school attendance supported by staff. Progress at school is recognised to be aided by the excellent communication and sharing of ideas between the school and the home. Staff attend all meetings at school and aid young people in expressing their views there. Parents and social workers comment on the consistent approach which is followed by the home, the school and the parents which leads to success and progress for the young people. They describe it as consistent, predictable and structured for the young people.

Staff work very closely with health care professionals achieving significant progress in many areas for young people. Young people enjoy improved sleep patterns, more varied diet, improved toileting skills and control of complex health issues. One parent said that staff are, 'trying hard to get young people to try other foods they persevere with this to get them eating healthily.' Young people enjoy significant improvements to the quality of their lives through this progress.

Young people learn a variety of self help skills in the home. Staff recognise the potential of the young people and present them with opportunities to achieve it. The care plans are carefully constructed to set each child achievable targets which they agree with their parents and social worker. These encourage young people to engage in their own care at a level they can succeed at such as brushing teeth, going to the toilet, cooking meals or making a choice between two drinks. Parents comment on the excellent one to one care which young people can enjoy in the setting which is not always possible to give at home. In addition young people learn how to form friendships and spend time with friends, which they often cannot do at home. Parents are lavish in their praise for the vast improvement they and the young people experience in the quality of their lives thanks to the home.

### Quality of care

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

Young people enjoy the company of staff and engage in positive activities and communication with them. Staff constantly consult with them and seek their views

and choices wherever possible. They actively listen to young people and always seek confirmation that they are meeting their request or matching their needs. Staff consult parents prior to admission to build up a clear understanding of the young persons care needs including those specific to their cultural, religious, linguistic or ethnic background. Staff seek to provide information to families in the first language of the parents and in a form which young people can understand, including lots of pictorial displays. Staff produce an initial guide from information gathered from parents which helps them to safely meet all care, health and cultural needs of the young person. Staff produce the highly detailed care plan from this, a dynamic constantly evolving document which reflects observation, consultation and signed agreement with young people, families and other professionals. Staff work very closely with external agencies to ensure that they provide safe, appropriate and high quality care to young people. The community disability nurse and occupational therapist comment on the excellent relationships which exist between them and the home. All parties comment on how they learn from each other and progress in one setting is shared with the others in the best interests of the young people. For example one young person exhibiting extreme behaviours benefitted from joint working and creative idea sharing between all parties and trainers in team teach bringing about a reduction in assaults on others and increased stability at home.

The managers of the home, ensure that they have right skills mix and gender balance in each shift to provide personal care to young people in line with their care plan. For example one parent has cultural reasons for wanting only female workers with her daughter. Staff actively seek young people's views for reviews, education meetings and in production of policies and procedures. They are innovative and creative in getting the views of children and presenting them in a way which accurately reflects their likes, dislikes and feelings. For example some young people can verbally present their opinions, some write their views, some select photographs for likes and dislikes and some use pictorial communication systems or a combination from these. Staff assisted children to use a variety of these methods to communicate with the inspector voicing their opinions and feelings during the inspection.

The manager and staff have excellent working relationships with local schools attended by the young people. Staff ensure that young people are properly prepared to arrive at school on time, appropriately dressed, breakfasted and with a packed lunch. Staff work closely with schools in preparing the care plan and in formulating ongoing programmes of work. Social workers and parents say that staff from the home are enthusiastic in their support of the schools and always attend education meetings, sports days and other school events. One social worker said that, 'staff are responsive to working with the school and social worker so that if the school are trying a different approach they try it as well to ensure consistency. Everyone works together so as not to confuse the child.' Staff provide young people with a vast choice of enjoyable activities both in the home and in the community. They seek to get young people involved in something other than television watching to increase their young people's confidence and skills. Where young people are used to passive entertainments they gradually build up their involvement in other activities whilst still respecting their choices. For example one young person was given two activities to choose from for five minutes before he could watch television then staff would

gradually increase the activity time.

Young people are given choice in meals but staff ensure that this does not endanger their health or parents requests for culturally appropriate meals. Staff maintain clear charts with the child's picture on it to avoid any errors in relation to food allergies, personal or cultural choices. The home is well located and is excellently equipped. Staff ensure that it is bright, clean and that the décor reflects the young people's wishes and interests. The home has recently benefitted from a comprehensive rebuild which has significantly enhanced the resource for young people. There is a small soft play barn outside with a hoist purchased by the parents support group which young people enthusiastically use. Staff use the new art room to provide beautiful paintings which adorn the building, sculptures for festive fun or crowns for dressing up games. There is a sensory room which parents and social workers say is well used by the young people. Staff also commented that the addition of a sleep in room and office space has greatly improved the environment for them as well.

### **Safeguarding children and young people**

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

Measures for ensuring the safety of young people during their stays at the home are outstanding. Policies and procedures are detailed, comprehensive, subject to regular review and promote excellent practice within the home. All staff receive high quality and ongoing training in safeguarding young people with disabilities and communicated an excellent working knowledge of procedures. Young people appear happy in the home and some commented on how well looked after they are and how much they like the staff. Parents say the young people look forward to going to the home and that they can relax knowing that they are safe. Parents' comments highlight the difference the short breaks make to the whole family and how knowledgeable staff are about the young people. Staff display an intimate and detailed knowledge of the young people and have highly effective means of communicating with them. One parent saying, 'At the open day it is lovely to see the staff with the children, they are comfortable with everyone and mix and mingle intuitively knowing what to do and how to talk to each child they met.' Staff patiently seek young people's views and choices at all times using highly personalised communication strategies, clearly outlined in care plans.

Young people do not go missing from the home or from trips out due to excellent staff supervision and agreed safety measures. Staff encourage positive behaviours from young people and are skilled at identifying triggers to difficult behaviour. Their use of physical interventions is minimal, used appropriately and recorded in detail to safeguard young people. Staff record interventions following warnings about poor behaviour as sanctions these are minimal and appropriate such as removal of an item which is being damaged. The manager has received no complaints since the last inspection and has excellent and responsive relationships with neighbours.

The manager ensures that the home is excellently maintained and that all health and

safety requirements are met. Staff take part in live fire scenario training to improve their ability to respond appropriately to emergencies. Staff conduct fire drills regularly and they are very knowledgeable about measures to safeguard all young people. Measures include the use of specialist equipment and methods of removing children who require the use of wheelchairs and hoists. The manager seeks to break down barriers to young people taking part in a wide range of activities in and out of the home. Staff are required to write risk assessments as opportunity assessments which gets them to see how an activity can happen rather than why it can not. The manager maintains a 'children's charter' which has this premise at its core and includes valuing each young person as an individual. Staff's practical application of these measures enables them to safely involve the young people in a wide range of fun activities.

The manager applies excellent recruitment procedures to ensure the suitability of staff and the positive engagement of children or their parents in the process of selection.

### **Leadership and management**

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

Parents, social workers and staff hold the managers of the service in high regard seeing them as, approachable, knowledgeable and as one parent put it, 'brilliant'. Staff are highly motivated by the managers although they reflect that they are not there because of the managers but because of their commitment to the young people. The manager has outstanding arrangements in place for the leadership and management of the service. He has an excellent range of monitors which he uses effectively to drive the service forward and to advise the expansive development plan. The manager has recently commenced further monitoring in line with Regulation 34 of the Children's Homes Regulations which he says will be used when reviewing the development plan. He maintains a comprehensive Statement of Purpose which clearly outlines the aims, objectives and aspirations of the home. Parents and social workers confirm that the manager successfully achieves these and effectively incorporates the views of the young people in the development of the service. One parent saying, 'The manager is brilliant, he runs the home really well, my only complaint is that I would like more time there.' The manager has an excellent record of addressing any recommendations or requirements. He demonstrates imaginative approaches to achieving successful outcomes for recent changes to guidance and national minimum standards, particularly in gaining the views of young people.

Staff are well qualified, long serving and highly motivated by the manager and by their commitment to the care of the children. They receive excellent guidance through regular supervision, comprehensive training and accessible managers enabling them to function extremely effectively as a team. They are very successful at meeting the complex and diverse needs of the young people using the service. A parent said, 'I just love them they are brilliant, so engaging, they are my lifeline!' The manager maintains high staffing ratios which are increased to meet individual needs and to provide a safe service for all young people. The staff team is a good



mix of age and gender and staff are sensitive to the cultural needs of the young people.

Individual case records are excellent providing easy access to well written information and provide a comprehensive overall picture of a young person's stay in the home. Staff write care plans from the young person's perspective and reflect their views and preferences in them. One social worker commenting, 'I have a new young person recently started there and at first meeting staff showed the parents the care plan which they thought was lovely, reading it from her perspective as if she had written it.' The manager has established focus groups within the staff team linked to work plan targets and setting achievable targets for service development. This has led to significant improvements in the service to young people and their families, particularly in communication and community involvement.

The manager has established excellent relationships with health, education, families and placing social workers. Parents, health professionals and social workers all comment on the excellent communication and close working across all areas leading to excellent outcomes for the young people.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.