

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Angus Mackay
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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 is managed by a 'non profit' organisation, which is a registered charity and was set up in response to the needs of local families and the local community.

The home provides a respite service for three children and young people between eight and 18, with learning difficulties, sensory impairment, physical disabilities or a combination of these.

Overall effectiveness

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

The outcomes for young people are excellent. Staff enjoy excellent close relationships with schools and colleges young people attend and ensure they work in a complementary way with them. Young people benefit from this relationship which aids in promotion of communication and a highly structured progression in their life skills. They love coming to the home where they have fun and have their often very complex health and care needs met by a highly enthusiastic, dedicated and competent staff group. Parents comment that the staff are particularly skilled at supporting young people's moves into adulthood.

Staff seek feed back from young people about all aspects of their experience of the home. Seeking the views of young people and affording them choice is central to the way of working. Parents praise the way of working which they describe as helping with progression, done at the young person's pace, excellent at aiding transitions and brilliant at helping young people experience friendships.

Management of the home is excellent with a highly experienced and knowledgeable manager providing clear guidance and motivation to staff and families. The manager works very closely with the parents who are positively engaged in the running of the home. The manager leads a drive for improvement and has a clear understanding of the strengths and areas for development within the home, outlined in the excellent development plan.

Staff maintain the home to a high standard and work closely with parents to develop physical improvements to the building to increase the quality of care for young people. Parents and professionals involved with the home regard it as an excellent service summed up by one parent, 'I would be lost without them they are brilliant, absolutely brilliant.' There were no recommendations or requirements arising from this inspection.

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people make outstanding progress whilst in the home. Parents and social workers comment that their progress is often in small stages, which staff carefully and skilfully pace for each young person. One parent described how over a long period staff had gradually relaxed the young person and waited until she was comfortable to perform personal care tasks with staff before recommending her for overnights. 'They did everything at her pace It is very important for her to have that independence from us they have been very patient with her.' Staff teach young people new skills as identified in their care plan and expressed in their personal choice. Young people learn diverse new skills such as enhanced communications, exercising choice between drinks, cooking and a wide range of self help and entertainment skills improving the quality of their life. One parent commented on how the staff responded to a request from them and taught their daughter how to ride a bike, something they could not safely do at home.

Young people make exceptional progress in confidence and developing their own identity. Staff provide them with opportunities to have normal friendships and to develop ways of interacting with others in a safe environment. One parent said something many others had raised, 'my daughter really enjoys the things they do which have helped in her progression and her perception of herself as a teenager.' Parents say that the home helps young people to prepare for various transitions in their lives and reduces the anxiety for them and for their family. They say that the home is very good at providing advice and support when young people are due to move on, 'they do not just support us in the home we see them as a family support, they are a bit of a life line for us.' Staff ensure that the diverse needs of the young people are identified during the assessment process and that they are met during their stays, in line with parental wishes.

Staff enjoy excellent relationships with the schools the young people attend. Young people benefit from the close working relationship which enhances the consistency of approach with them. One teacher praised the work of the home in supporting the school, 'they really put themselves out to help young people make transitions they help with the move away from home and support work in school. They prepare young people properly for school. They really support school work.' Young people are encouraged to take part in educational games and learning experiences in the home in support of the school work. Young people, for example, with assistance from the home, made a brilliant animated film outlining the dangers of using the internet. New young people receive a copy of the film which is the idea and product of the current young people. Young people are encouraged by these experiences, mentor support and staff encouragement to expand their boundaries and benefit from all of the learning opportunities in the home.

Young people receive excellent assistance with their complex health needs and have the opportunity to choose to take part in a wide range of entertaining activities which were previously inaccessible to them. Staff support them in taking on new challenges which are carefully judged to be achievable and challenging. One parent commenting about her daughter, 'she gets choice in the home which is in line with her ability.

They do extra things which make a massive difference to us as a family and to her as a young woman'. The excellent health care aids both young people and their parents as assistance is given to support appointments and hospital stays. Young people are aided in managing their health problems and staff provide them with additional support as required. For example the nursing staff gave direct help and training to a local college to ease the move of some young people with complex feeding issues.

Quality of care

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

Young people enjoy coming to the home and have a wide range of fun and educational activities to choose from when they are there. Parents and social workers have a very high opinion of the care provided to them and the relationships formed with staff. A typical comment from a parent is, 'they are a great team; my daughter knows them all and trusts them all, she is happy to be with them, any of them.' Staff are aware of the highly individual care and health needs of all of the young people offered short breaks and meet these in line with the detailed care plans. Staff take great care to ensure that all dietary needs are met retaining due regard to the complex health needs, cultural requirements and young people's choices.

Staff seek feedback from young people on all aspects of their performance and of the things on offer during the stay. Staff analyse feedback and incorporate it into care plans and reviews to improve the quality of care and enjoyment for the young people. They are highly skilled at communicating with young people but are not afraid to seek advice and guidance from parents, social workers, school and health professionals to expand their competency with each young person. Staff sought assistance from the local special school and sat in on classes to ensure a consistent approach with some children with extreme communication difficulties. The teacher commented that this had proved invaluable with the young people who had benefitted from this joint working.

Social workers comment on how good the home is at helping young people to participate in reviews and aid them in representing their choices, preferences and personal views. One saying, 'they will represent the child and talk very personally presenting their needs, likes, dislikes and advocate for them. If the child is more able they provide them with support or guidance saying things like did you want to mention...?' Staff maintain detailed care plans on young people which involves consultation with young people, parents and social workers. The care plans give a clear picture of each young person and guidance on all aspects of successful working with them. Staff, following the care plan, are able to meet all of the young person's cultural and religious needs evidenced by explicit advice on how to aid some young people with their religious practices.

Staff have recently changed the procedure and practice for issuing medication following an error in dosage. The local health trust has advised on improvements and has trained all staff in the new procedure. Staff maintain these rigorous procedures

to minimise the risk of error in the issuing or safe control of medicines to keep young people safe. One parent gave an example from the previous week, where the new procedure had picked up on an error made by the pharmacy. She outlined how well the staff managed the situation by communicating with her, the doctor and the pharmacy to ensure the safe care of the young person.

Staff are excellent at supporting young people's attendance at school. They enjoy an excellent working relationship with the local school and college which extends to joint training and cross visiting. Staff ensure that young people arrive at school on time and properly prepared. One teacher said that young people are always properly dressed, have everything they need for school and either a packed lunch or individual meal if they have a particular dietary or cultural requirement. Staff attend social events at school in support of the young people and attend all reviews to enhance the continuity of care.

Staff promote the health needs of the young people and are highly skilled at meeting complex health care needs. Staff encourage young people to engage in personal care seeking progression at the young persons pace. They provide support to young people to access health care outside the home attending hospital and doctors appointments as requested by parents. Parents and social workers gave several examples of staff support including staying in hospital with young people or aiding where parents or young people suffer various phobias. One parent comments, 'the service is very holistic and goes well beyond the boundaries of the building or their role as a short break service, by helping us with hospital or doctors appointments.' A social worker commented that staff had proved invaluable in supporting health care to one young person in hospital where the staff were very anxious about communication.

Young people enjoy visits in a well resourced home. The décor is bright and reflects the wishes of young people and their families gained through consultation. Staff control access to external areas and the kitchen by keypads, to ensure the safety of these very vulnerable young people. The manager keeps this control under constant review too ensure it remains necessary for all young people. Young people enjoy cooking and helping staff in the kitchen learning new self help skills. One parent said that a major achievement for her daughter was to set the table, then sit with others at it. Young people have a modified bathroom which makes it accessible and safe to all users. They enjoy adequate space within the building and a good selection of games and art materials which they use frequently. Young people use the dining area for art work and games with staff signifying the change in function with different coloured table cloths to aid young people's understanding of the transition. Staff proudly display the pictures and posters young people have produced including anti-bullying posters. The garden is full of fun equipment which young people use subject to their personal risk assessments to learn new skills, exercise and just have fun.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

safe.

Young people enjoy coming to the home for their breaks and parents say they have implicit trust in the staff. Parents gave many glowing testimonials to the safety of the home and praised the openness and honesty of the staff. Placing social workers were also happy with the care and protection afforded to highly vulnerable young people with complex care and health needs. One said, 'Staff are open and honest, I have never had cause for concern with the home they are great, really fantastic.' Staff application of comprehensive policies and procedures supports and enhances the care of young people. The manager maintains a very high focus on safeguarding of young people ensuring that, volunteers, committee members and all staff receive regular training in safeguarding young people with disabilities.

Staff are very aware of their safeguarding responsibilities to young people and combine safe working practices with opportunities for young people to exercise decision making, choice and self care. Managers exercise great care when organising rotas to match the medical and care needs, preferences and fun opportunities for the young people. This entails getting the mix of young people right and the staff to support them. Parents comment on the social opportunities for their children which they cannot provide at home: 'This is where my daughter comes to see her mates, they are really good at bookings to get the right mix for young people so they have a sleep over.' Staff are very skilled at communicating with the young people and pick up on verbal and non verbal cues to choices in highly personal care. Staff ensure that they always honour young people's cultural needs and meet their preferences, wherever they can.

Staff maintain good relationships within the home and remain alert for signs of distress, anxiety or upset in young people. There is no bullying within the home but young people have identified issues in the wider community. Young people have created their own anti-bullying poster and a DVD on safe surfing of the internet. The content of these enhanced safety pointers is excellent. Staff rarely utilise physical interventions but where they have, the circumstances were appropriate and recording was detailed and in line with regulations. Young people do not go missing from the home or when on trips. Staff maintain excellent risk assessments on young people which aid them in keeping the young people safe, both in and out of the home. Within the kitchen access to cupboards and drawers is controlled by child locks which ensure that highly vulnerable young people are kept safe. The home has a strong focus on health and safety and provides a safe and secure environment for young people. Fire safety practice is excellent with staff running through, 'what if' scenarios on every shift to ensure the safety of the young people at that time. Training and procedures for health and safety are excellent and enhance the safe care of the young people.

The Registered Manager has excellent recruitment practice which incorporates feedback from the young people. Questioning is excellent and staff are required to do a presentation on safeguarding of children which aids in identifying appropriate staff and learning objectives when they are appointed. These practices ensure the

suitability of staff appointed and for the protection of young people's welfare. The manager looks to enhance the diversity of the care team through this recruitment practice whilst maintaining the high level of competency in the team.

Leadership and management

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

Young people enjoy care in a home which is excellently managed and well resourced to meet their needs. They enjoy an excellent standard of care from the diverse, well qualified staff team. Managers provide additional training which exceeds national standards and enhances staff skills at working with the young people. Staff participate enthusiastically in the highly engaging training. Young people benefit from the enhanced training which staff engage in to maintain professional registrations or expand their skills.

Managers fully support young people's carers to perform their roles through excellent professional supervision including clinical supervision for nurses. Staff are very positive about the support they receive and say that managers are accessible, knowledgeable and always prioritise the care needs of the young people. Managers ensure that supervision is regular and links well with annual appraisals which staff say are challenging and push them to improve standards for the young people.

Managers maintain a comprehensive Statement of Purpose, outlining their aims and objectives, which they make available to parents and social workers. They ensure that staff meet these aims and objectives and they have an excellent track record of meeting previous inspection recommendations and requirements. Managers ensure that staff are aware of changes in legislation and modify procedures and practice to meet young people's needs in line with these changes. The detailed development plan is structured, challenging and demonstrates an ongoing commitment to regularly reviewed progress. Managers make excellent use of monitoring information which aids in targeting improvements in the care of the young people.

The Registered Manager is highly thought of by staff, young people, parents and professionals working with the home. One parent comments, 'nothing is too much trouble for them but particularly the manager.' Young people and their families gain significantly from the excellent links she has forged with other agencies in the local community. The parents committee described the home as holistic and being like a resource centre for them linking to every other agency available for their children. They all comment on the highly personalised care which the young people receive in line with cultural and religious needs.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.