

## Inspection report for children's home

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<b>Inspection date</b>	17/07/2012
<b>Inspector</b>	Robert Hewston
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<b>Provision subtype</b>	Children's home

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## Service information

### Brief description of the service

The home is run by a local authority and provides short breaks for five children with physical disabilities, learning disabilities and sensory impairment.

### The inspection judgements and what they mean

**Outstanding:** a service of exceptional quality that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

**Good:** a service of high quality that exceeds minimum requirements

**Adequate:** a service that only meets minimum requirements

**Inadequate:** a service that does not meet minimum requirements

## Overall effectiveness

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

Young people with high levels of complex needs are supported to make good progress. Overall this home provides good outcomes for young people with some excellent aspects particularly noted in relationships with staff and keeping young people safe. Care is personalised and takes account of the individual needs of each young person. They benefit from the familiar surroundings and a strong team of staff.

Young people view the home as a good home with a happy atmosphere. This is echoed by parents and social workers. The quality of the relationships between staff and children and young people in the home are supportive. Staff are caring and inclusive and this helps young people feel valued and supported. Staff embrace equality and diversity in their day-to-day practice.

The determination of staff to continually learn, to reflect on practice and to improve communication with young people forms a cornerstone of the good practice at this home.

Parents and families are able to have a break while their children stay at the home. However, because of the quality of care staff provide their children also find their lives enriched. The home is more than substitute care to provide parents with some respite. Rather, it is a place where children and young people can benefit from new experiences, friendships and nurturing care.

### Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people receiving short break care in this home are cared for in line with their individual needs as identified in their care/short break care plan. Staff work well together to address young people's individual needs and promote their physical and emotional well-being. Young people initiate interactions with staff support. They enjoy social exchanges and practise important skills in communication. This includes giving eye contact, smiling or laughing. The outcome for young people is to get responses to their actions and leads to positive interactions.

Young people are provided with good opportunities to take part in activities, develop their own interests and to enjoy life. They are able to achieve their potential. Over the past year young people have had opportunities to play sport, go swimming, bake cakes and involvement in community activities in the surrounding area.

Medication accompanies young people into the home at the start of each period of short break care. Good procedures, staff training and very clear record maintenance ensures correct management of all medication and protects young people's safety. All staff as part of their core training undertake a basic first aid and medication administration course. Staff have also researched and identified any potential side effects of young people's medication. Their health needs are additionally safeguarded because of the comprehensive access to different health care professionals. For example, direct medical support for additional health needs such as epilepsy, diabetes and types of tube feeding. One social worker commented, 'I am really pleased, my young person has made significant progress across the board including issues being fully addressed with their health.' Young people who experience changes to their medication receive close monitoring so that their physician can make the necessary adjustments.

All young people are encouraged to participate in monthly house meetings. They positively influence choices by making requests about food and menus, activities and different resources. They are protected additionally because the children's rights advocacy officer regularly visits the home. They work closely with disabled children and young people to ensure that their wishes and feelings are expressed and acted on.

Staff work extremely well in partnership with parents and other agencies to ensure young people's needs in relation to health and education are fully supported. Although health and education remain the responsibility of parents, staff attend all reviews and contribute fully and effectively so that there is comprehensive information about a young person to inform planning. One social worker commented 'the staff have always been proactive in attending education and care reviews. An in depth report is always made available for all parties, parents in particular, to help further develop the young person's education and social skills.'

## **Quality of care**

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

Young people enjoy positive and constructive relationships with staff and with each other and behave appropriately. Staff know the young people very well and know how to pre-empt any incidents. For example, staff recognise the importance of a consistent approach with young people when changing routines or if there are the changes to the building. Staff ensure that the level of communication needed is passed onto young people to ensure they feel safe and well. During the inspection it was observed that the minute the young people arrive from school they became the centre of attention for staff. Staff shows genuine interest in how their day has been, how they are feeling and what they want to do. Young people appear thrilled to be back in the company of the staff. Young people stated, 'always like coming here the staff are great and always have a fun time'. These strong, mutual relationships form the basis of the young people's improvements while they live in the home. At the same time, staff nurture friendships between young people. They exercise care and judgement in deciding which young people should stay together in the home. As a result, young people can feel safe and secure in each other's company.

Staff have progressively improved their capacity to communicate with young people. They have invested time and effort in acquiring skills in a number of different communication methods. For example, with the assistance of a music therapist the staff now recognise how some young people react to their voice being at a higher pitch than normal. Staff commented, 'we started to recognise how young people react to television programmes where the characters spoke in high pitch voices. The music therapist also confirmed how using a higher pitch voice is enabling some young people to hear and understand better. This has helped young people to have a voice in their time within the home.' Staff show great willingness to implement communication strategies which parents develop for their individual children. Staff use communication methods throughout their daily work with children. They are effective in gaining the views of children and young people, helping them to make choices, express views and be involved in planning their activities.

Parents confirm that they are informed of the home's complaints system prior to the young person's first stay. Details of how to raise issues of concern or make complaints are also included in the parents and young people's guide. Proper investigation and satisfactory resolution of all complaints ensures that parents have confidence in the home's complaints procedures. Discussion with the children's right advocate confirmed how young people are given the opportunity to complain and are helped by staff and the advocate for their complaint to be fully investigated.

Young people are cared for in line with their present placement agreement. However a change to the local borough has impacted on young people's paperwork with regard to short break plans and placement plans. The management of the home had already identified this issue and received one new short break plan that includes consultation with social workers, parents and other external professionals ensuring all relevant information is within the new plan.

Individual needs relating to a child's cultural background and personal identity are identified and positively addressed in both daily living and care planning. Young

people have equal access to, and benefit of all opportunities. The regular 'Voice' meeting includes topics on diversity and equality; in particular issues relating to young people with different cultures and disabilities are discussed.

The home has a number of facilities, both indoor and outdoor, including televisions, computers, electronic and board games. This enables young people to have time as a group but also quiet individual time doing their own thing. Young people also use community facilities to promote their integration. For example, young people have trips to the park and go on day trips. All activities are well assessed and have been staffed well. The home enjoys good links to local facilities and has access to suitably adapted vehicles which means that young people have convenient and safe transport for activities. Parents commented, 'the trips are always discussed with us. We know the children are safe and really enjoy the experience of a day out.'

The home is adequately adapted for disabled young people. The home is generally well maintained. Good quality soft furnishings and furniture enhance the homely aspects of the environment. Many of the facilities such as, the bathrooms, sinks and motorised profile beds are adapted for wheelchair height usage. Disabled young people benefit because the physical environment is designed for maximum comfort, safety and ease of use. Staff take seriously their responsibility to keep the home in good order so that it is both an enjoyable and safe environment.

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

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

Staff ensure young people feel safe in the home and remain safe both inside and outside the home. Staff fulfil their duties by ensuring young people are safeguarded. One member of staff commented, 'Safeguarding and protecting disabled children and young people is a primary concern of all managers and staff.' This is underpinned by clear procedures and effective refresher training for staff. Young people are supported to keep safe from hazards and risks including self-injury. Young people are kept safe, their experiences are positive and the quality of care is consistent. Their evident enjoyment, both observed and reported, when coming for their short breaks confirms that they feel safe and happy. Staff are very good at highlighting any potential risks and clearly determine through thorough written risk assessments how the risks are going to be managed and thus minimised.

Safe practices are regularly reviewed and underpinned by thorough risk assessments focusing on young people's welfare and safety. Staff are acutely aware of young people's vulnerabilities because of disability and know how to deliver intimate personal care safely. The home is kept safe from hazards and is well maintained to provide a homely environment. Health and safety checks, including checks of fire equipment are routinely undertaken to maintain a safe environment.

Young people's behaviour is excellent. They become settled because staff respond appropriately to them. Staff use positive interventions including, diversion, calming

techniques and offering time away from the peer group under supervision. Parents spoken too stated, 'I feel the home is a safe place for my child, the staff really know him and he is well cared for.' One young person spoken to stated, 'I love the staff and the home, I feel safe and well looked after.'

The home has a vigorous health and safety regime, which ensures that all fire precautions, drills and equipment servicing are conducted routinely, consistently and within timescales set by the relevant regulations. Excellent staffing levels further help to keep young people safe and reduce any risk of harm. The organisation's effective recruitment procedures ensure the careful selection recruitment and retention of staff. This ensures young people are safe and have a staff team who know them well. New staff are comprehensively vetted prior to their deployment in the home and before having unsupervised access to any young person. This ensures young people are safe and have a staff team who know them well.

Staff provide constant supervision for young people when outside the home to minimise the risk of them getting lost or running away. However, they also help young people to develop sufficient confidence to be able to undertake enjoyable activities with some element of risk in the community. No young person has gone missing from this home for many years.

## **Leadership and management**

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

The Registered Manager and staff team deliver an outstanding level of care for young people. The home is effectively and efficiently managed and the manager constantly communicates high expectations to staff. Young people, their families and the placing authority are given comprehensive information about the services offered by the home. The home is well resourced, indicating the financial viability of the provider. The staff treat young people with the utmost respect and dignity and support them in overcoming significant and complex issues.

The staff team is very experienced and highly skilled. As well as attending training staff take individual responsibility for continued learning and reflective practice. During handovers and shift planning it is evident staff seek to learn from each other. This is also apparent in the way staff learn from specialist co-ordinators in the staff team. This is a highly motivated staff team which provides ever improving care for children and young people.

The home has comprehensive development plans for continuing improvement based upon its track record, continual staff training and ensuring that the physical environment is maintained to a high standard. Records are clear, up to date and stored securely and contribute significantly to the young people's understanding of their life in care, if they choose to access these documents. The Registered Manager has a clear and realistic understanding of the strengths and areas for further development. The home demonstrates a capacity for sustained improvement based upon performance over the last year and continued development of excellent

outcomes for young people. All significant events relating to the protection of young people accommodated in the home are notified by the registered person to the appropriate authorities and appropriate action is taken following the incident; this ensures the safety of young people.

Ofsted have received no complaints about this home since the last inspection. Records at the home show that compliments have been received about providing outstanding quality care. The home quickly looks to resolve any concerns without delay which it has done successfully. As a result, feedback is used to strengthen and improve experiences for young people.

Staff regularly receive good supervision which enables them to explore their feelings about their role. Regular team meetings focus on meeting young people's needs, improving the care staff offer and mutually supporting the staff team. Senior managers routinely monitor practice and support staff. In depth levels of monitoring ensures practice is accountable in physical interventions and strategies to manage behaviours. Excellent independent visits further monitor care practices and overall measures ensure care remains consistently high. Staff talk positively about the support they receive. They confirm that supervision and appraisal meetings are carried out on a regular basis; these enable them to reflect on their practice and relationships with young people.

The staff in this home have a clear sense of purpose and understanding of the aims of the service. The Statement of Purpose and children's guide communicate these to parents, young people and other professionals. This shared understanding of purpose supports the outstanding work which staff undertake.



## 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.