

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC059842
Inspection date	25/07/2012
Inspector	Lynn O'Driscoll
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	31/01/2012
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This is a council owned and run children's home. It is registered to provide a short break service for up to five young people at any given time who have a permanent and substantial disability. Currently, 31 children and young people from 10 to 18 years are accessing this service and specific support is also provided to their families.

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 **outstanding**.

Young people are very safe and secure and 'really love' their short breaks at this home. They enjoy excellent relationships with the staff and benefit from highly personalised care which meets their unique and complex needs. Given their starting points they are making excellent progress. Examples include: self-care, eating and sleeping patterns, communication, mobility and behaviours.

This home provides a highly responsive, flexible and needs led service. Children and young people, their parents or foster carers and social workers are all consistently very positive about the quality of care provided. Parents describe it as 'a lifesaver'. In particular they say, 'it enables us to recharge our batteries' and, 'we can give quality time to our other children'. Consequently, this service plays a significant role in ensuring families stay together and long-term foster care placements are sustained.

This service clearly demonstrates continuous improvement making full use of rigorous monitoring processes and feedback received from stakeholders. Managers are very clear about the strengths of this service and the key areas for development. Appropriate development plans are in place to address the latter. For example, a bathroom is being converted into another shower room as this is proving to be more popular with children and young people.

There are no breaches of regulation arising from this inspection and only one recommendation. This is to regularly ascertain the views of social workers and

Independent Reviewing Officers on the quality of care provided, to inform the six monthly Regulation 34 reports.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the service should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure the views of social workers and Independent Reviewing Officers on the quality of care provided, are regularly sought, to inform six monthly Regulation 34 reports. (NMS 1.4)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Children and young people thoroughly enjoy their short breaks at this home and the opportunity to establish positive relationships with other young people. They benefit from a particularly spacious and healthy environment where their physical, medical and emotional needs are extremely well met. Of the children and young people attending the setting 100% do not smoke, drink alcohol or take illicit drugs.

The children and young people particularly love taking part in the very good range of highly challenging and stimulating activities on offer both in the home and the community, including charity events. This significantly increases their social interactions and increases their self-esteem and confidence. Recent examples include, climbing, sky diving, indoor skiing and water sports.

Children and young people are treated and respected as individuals in their own right and benefit from highly individualised care to address their unique needs and personal preferences. Consequently, they are developing a clear sense of identity and their self-image is significantly improving. A recent example is not only tolerating but enjoying being the centre of attention at their prom nights.

School attendance is excellent and given their starting points children and young people are making exceptional progress.

The daily life of this home provides ability appropriate opportunities for all the children and young people to develop social and independent skills. This maximises their individual potentials, with some excellent outcomes. Examples include, significantly improved eating and sleeping patterns and challenging behaviours, increased mobility, communication and self care skills. They also enjoy cooking and baking and learning how to grow fruit and vegetables in the home's allotment. Moreover, two local schools are now using the expertise of this service to prepare their pupils for future independence.

Parents say, 'this service gives our son the chance to socialise and be more independent' and, 'my daughter is exceptionally well looked after. She is always lovely and clean and her hair washed and styled.'

Comments from a young person include, 'I like it here and so do my parents', 'I really enjoy my stays. I like to be where it's happening. I have done lots of different things including growing and eating strawberries' and, 'I love being with other young people. I have a great relationship with my key worker and we have lots of laughs. She came to my prom.'

Quality of care

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

Parents are fully involved in care planning and are highly satisfied with the quality of care provided at this home. The detailed and creatively presented information for reviews also ensures they gain a real insight into their child's time away from home.

Children and young people's views, wishes and feelings are central to the day-to-day running of the home. They all exercise genuine choice in, for example, the meals they eat, the activities they participate in and the bedrooms they prefer to sleep in. Many have also been especially influential in deciding on the décor and furnishings in the home and in developing the newsletter. One budding young chef has a specific page sharing his recipes. Another young person has regular meetings with the manager to represent all the children and young people's views. This reinforces the fact that their opinions matter and are valued, which in turn increases their self-esteem and confidence.

Children and young people also influence the development of the service including the recruitment and selection of staff. They are given full autonomy to ask their own highly relevant questions including, 'I am in a wheelchair. How will you keep me safe?' They also know how to make a complaint, although the need has never arisen.

Children and young people benefit from highly personalised care in line with their short break plans. Their complex needs are extremely well met and they enjoy particularly positive relationships with their peers and the staff. Young people's views of individual members of staff include, 'she is soooooo artistic and plans lots of arty activities with us', 'she is always smiling which makes me feel comfortable', 'she is fabulous. We love our chats and banter with her. She is so caring and calm' and, 'she makes sure my bedroom is set up to suit me. She is thoughtful.'

Staff actively encourage and support the children and young people's education in close partnership with parents. They also use their expertise to advise schools on how to best meet young people's unique needs and specific behaviours. This intervention has been highly effective in avoiding exclusions.

A particular strength of this home is the provision of purposeful and enjoyable leisure activities during their short breaks. The feedback from children and young people's

parents is consistently very positive in this regard.

The staff constantly make improvements to the environment so it is particularly child-friendly and welcoming. It offers a good choice of specialist toileting facilities and communal rooms to meet specific needs and preferences. In addition to the main lounge with television and computer, there is also a sensory light and sound room and 'chill out zone' where young people can play electronic games. The particularly large garden is also well equipped with furniture and toys to benefit a good range of ages and abilities. Comments from young people include, 'I really like it here because it has lots of space, so I can get everywhere in my wheelchair' and, 'the new carpets, curtains and cushions are lovely.'

Good health and well-being is actively promoted at this home, including ensuring regular physical exercise. A particular strength is the outstanding range of appropriate specialist services staff access for young people in a timely manner to meet their unique and highly complex physical and medical needs. There are also robust procedures in place to ensure the safe administration of first aid and medication. Parents retain the main responsibility for ensuring timely health checks and arranging routine health appointments, but staff keep in very regular communication over any health matters.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Children and young people are safe and feel safe at this home. They confirm that the rules in this home are fair and good behaviour and effort is positively reinforced, which has the desired effect. High staffing ratios, an excellent knowledge of each child's specific triggers and competence in diffusing challenging behaviours means that there have been no missing from care incidences, allegations of abuse, sanctions or restraints.

Parents say, 'knowing my son is happy and in a secure environment surrounded by people he is extremely fond of allows us to relax and gives us the chance to spend quality time with his sister' and, 'this service gives me time to relax and spend time with other family members with the peace of mind that he is enjoying himself and being well cared for.'

There are excellent arrangements in place to safeguard and promote the welfare of disabled children. Staff are suitably trained and take a proactive approach to any concerns, working closely with relevant agencies.

There is very careful matching of groups of children and young people to ensure compatibility. High staffing ratios also ensures close monitoring and supervision in line with individual risk assessments. This means this service is highly effective in preventing incidents of bullying.

All the required safety certificates are in place to evidence a very safe and well

maintained building. Specialist equipment is also regularly serviced to ensure it remains in excellent working order. Moreover, there are robust fire safety processes in place. This includes, quarterly fire drills involving children and young people to help to ensure they know exactly what to do in the case of a real fire.

There are well established and highly effective recruitment and selection processes in place to ensure a safe and competent workforce. These include the renewal of Criminal Records Bureau checks every three years. Staff files are held and maintained centrally and have recently been audited to ensure they all include the legally required information. Moreover, the home is now developing their own key documentation as an additional safeguard.

Leadership and management

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

This service is very well resourced and clearly demonstrates a capacity for continued improvement. The most significant development is the revision of staff profiles with children and young people. These include their views about individual staff members which will inform annual appraisals.

Staff say this is a really good, safe and progressive authority to work for. Consequently, they are highly motivated and retention rates are exceptionally good.

An up to date Statement of Purpose is in place. This accurately describes the aims and services provided at this home. The children's guide is also available in a range of appropriate formats to meet the needs of all the children and young people accessing this service.

This home is extremely well managed by a suitably qualified, highly experienced and child-focused individual. Young people describe her as, 'a good boss who makes things happen for us.' There are also suitable arrangements in place to deputise in her absence.

This home is always well staffed by an exceptionally stable and dedicated team. All have completed the required qualifications for their respective roles and responsibilities. They are also very experienced, well supported and supervised. Consequently, they are highly competent to meet the unique and complex needs and personal preferences of the children and young people who have short breaks.

Well established and robust monitoring processes are in place. This ensures any shortfalls identified are effectively addressed in a timely manner. The one recommendation made at the last interim inspection on 31 January 2012 was efficiently and satisfactorily addressed. Consequently, a six monthly report on the quality of care provided at the home in consultation with children and young people was forwarded to Ofsted. However, it does not include the views of social workers and Independent Reviewing Officers. This is unfortunate because the feedback received via Ofsted is extremely complimentary. The vast majority described the

service as 'excellent.' They also confirmed a very effective working relationship to safeguard and promote the welfare of all the children and young people.

The required documentation is maintained to an excellent standard and young people actively contribute to their own personal records. They provide an accurate and very positive account of their background, progress, achievements and future goals. Support plans in particular are extremely personalised and child-centred, providing very clear and detailed directions about their preferred care.

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.