

## Inspection report for children's home

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<b>Inspector</b>	Lynn O'Driscoll
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Full
<b>Provision subtype</b>	Children's home

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<b>Date of last inspection</b>	19/03/2013
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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 children and young people at any given time who have a permanent and substantial disability. They may also have additional health care needs arising from sensory and physical impairments and/or a range of challenging behaviours. Currently, 29 children and young people from 10 to 18 years are accessing this service. Their short breaks can form part of a broader package of support to families, which is reviewed every six months to ensure it remains suitable.

### 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**.

This home provides a highly responsive, exceptionally flexible and needs led service. The staff have an in-depth knowledge of each individual child and adapt their approach as their complex needs change. Ultimately, this service plays a significant role in ensuring families stay together and long-term foster care placements are sustained. Parents describe it as, 'a lifesaver' and, 'a godsend.'

Every short break is extremely well planned to ensure that all the children and young people are very safe and secure and have positive experiences. They enjoy excellent relationships with the staff and their peers and benefit from highly personalised care which meets their unique and complex needs and personal preferences.

Consequently, given their starting points they are making excellent progress.

Examples include: demonstrably improved self-esteem, self-care, eating and sleeping patterns, communication, mobility and behaviours.

Children and young people 'really love' their short breaks. Their parents or foster carers, social workers and a wide range of stakeholders are also all consistently extremely positive about the outstanding quality of care provided. Indeed, it is being emulated by other Local Authorities.

This service clearly demonstrates excellent continuous improvement, making full use

of rigorous monitoring processes. The managers are very clear about the many strengths of this service and the key areas for development. Appropriate development plans are in place to address the latter.

There are no breaches of regulation arising from this inspection and only one recommendation. This is to demonstrate that constructive criticism from parents informs continual development of the service.

## Areas for improvement

### Recommendations

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

- demonstrate that the views of parents are taken into account in the development of the home. (NMS 1.7)

### Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **outstanding**.

Children and young people 'really love' their short breaks at this home and the opportunity to establish and maintain positive relationships with their peers. They also enjoy excellent relationships with all the staff. 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 currently attending the setting, 100% do not smoke, drink alcohol or take illicit drugs. Some extreme challenging behaviours have also ceased. A few young people have already surpassed their life expectancy.

Comments from children and young people include, 'I love staying here. I have made lots of friends and I love all the staff because they are nice and kind to me. I just think it's a wonderful place', 'I really enjoyed the art project. We made a huge mural which is in the garden for everyone to see', 'I have been coming here for nearly 2 years and I really enjoy it. I like to spend time alone in the sensory room listening to music and pulling faces at myself in the mirror. When the weather is nice I like to spend time in the garden. The swings, trampoline and climbing frame are great fun.'

Children and young people particularly enjoy taking part in an excellent range of highly challenging and stimulating activities on offer both in the home and the community. This significantly increases their social interactions, self-esteem and confidence.

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. This in turn has a very positive impact

on challenging behaviours.

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, increased mobility, patience, tolerance, 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 frequently use the excellent facilities at this home and the expertise of the staff to better prepare their pupils for future independence.

Comments from children and young people include, 'I have been put in the positive behaviour book for being helpful by taking my empty plates to the sink for washing without being asked. Everyone was impressed' and, 'I love helping in the kitchen and the garden and vacuuming.' One social worker said, 'this home is particularly good at developing social interactions, for example, learning to share and negotiating meals and outings.' A parent confirmed, 'my daughter talks a lot about how much she enjoys her short breaks. She is very chatty with the staff which is a really good sign because she is very shy'.

## Quality of care

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

This service is highly valued by children and young people, their families and professionals.

Children and young people are exceptionally well cared for in line with their very detailed and highly individualised short breaks plans and risk assessments. They benefit from extremely nurturing experiences that are stimulating, rewarding, enjoyable and developmentally positive. A wide diversity of complex physical, medical and behavioural needs, ethnicities, religions and dietary requirements are extremely well met.

Staff work enthusiastically and extremely effectively with children and young people's social workers and families, to promote continuity of care and positive outcomes. One social worker confirmed, 'fantastic joint working. I have nothing but praise for the way in which the staff dealt with a family's recent difficulties. The time frame was astounding and has made a significant difference to their lives in a very short space of time.'

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. Comments from parents include: 'It's brilliant. My son loves coming here and likes all

the staff'; 'we don't know what we would do without this service. The staff are like a family. They are supportive, reliable and great company for my child who loves coming here'; and 'my child has been coming for five years and the excellent standard has been consistent throughout. The staff have never had an off day in all that time. I cannot talk highly enough about them. They are all lovely people and cannot do enough for you. If they can fit in additional nights they will.'

A few parents have offered constructive criticism to improve the service even more, but there is no documentary evidence that these have been considered and positively responded to.

Very gradual and highly sensitive admission processes and practices are firmly established. This means children and young people settle quickly and parents can relax leaving their child overnight for the first time. A very significant development is the fact that some young people have now built up the confidence to be actively involved in showing prospective families around the home and grounds and answering any questions they may have. Also, one young person now chooses to make welcome cards for children and young people's first overnight stay, which increases their sense of belonging.

Children and young people's views, wishes and feelings are central to the day-to-day running of the home. Staff have an excellent understanding of each child, so they immediately notice any changes in their moods, gestures, sounds, facial expressions and behaviours and can, therefore, ascertain and respond positively to their needs, wishes and feelings. Consequently, all the children and young people 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 producing the six monthly newsletter. This develops computer and communication skills. One budding young chef has a specific page sharing her 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.

All reviews are up to date and children and young people are actively encouraged and supported to participate. One young person said, 'I really enjoy attending my reviews and telling them about how much I love my short breaks. The last one went very well and we all decided that I should carry on coming for three nights a month, hip, hip, hooray. I play a very big part in the newsletter. I have my own jokes section "bum bum".' An independent reviewing officer confirmed, 'I have an excellent working relationship with the staff. All my recommendations arising from short break reviews have been dealt with promptly.'

Children and young people also influence the development of the service including the recruitment and selection of staff. This includes the appointment of senior managers within the wider short break service. They are given full autonomy to ask their own highly relevant questions including, 'when we are going out, what do you need to think about?'; 'if I am not happy about something how will you support me?';

and 'if I wasn't able to talk, how would you find out what I like doing? One young person said, 'I love interviewing staff. The social worker I chose came to visit this home and I showed her around. She said I did an excellent job.'

Staff actively encourage and support the children and young people's education in close partnership with parents. Teachers confirm 'excellent working relationships.' They share expertise to best meet children and young people's unique needs and specific behaviours. This has been highly effective in avoiding exclusions.

One particular strength of this home is the provision of purposeful and enjoyable leisure activities during their short breaks. Individual interests and talents are also actively encouraged and supported which increases confidence and competences. Examples include, bell ringing, poetry and drawing. The carefully planned annual summer fun days and Christmas parties are very popular family events.

Good health and well-being is actively promoted at this home, including the provision of homemade nutritious meals and ensuring regular physical exercise. Another key strength is the outstanding range of appropriate specialist services staff access for children and 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. They also have a proven ability to successfully advocate on behalf of children and young people and their families to ensure correct diagnoses are made and therefore the most effective treatment and support is provided. A physiotherapist confirmed, 'amazing facilities, environment and atmosphere. The staff do an awesome job. There is excellent encouragement and help for the young people to engage with their therapy programmes during their stays empowering them to do well, make progress and reach their potential.'

A continual programme of redecoration ensures that this purpose built bungalow always provides an excellent standard of accommodation. For example, the kitchen has been completely refurbished and redecorated since the last inspection and the paths to the swings and green house replaced. This enables children and young people in wheelchairs to independently access these amenities.

Prior to every short break, careful attention is paid to the safety and suitability of the physical environment, to ensure the accommodation meets the children and young people's specific needs. Consequently, they always benefit from homely, child-friendly, and suitably equipped surroundings. The sensory light and sound room and 'chill out zone' is particularly popular with the children and young people. The large garden is also well equipped with furniture and toys to benefit a good range of ages and abilities. Views from parents include, 'it is proper homely and the garden is fantastic'; 'it is very clean and lovely with brilliant facilities'; and 'it is a very modern, well adapted and equipped home.'

## **Safeguarding children and young people**

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

There are excellent arrangements in place to safeguard and promote the welfare of disabled children at this home. Staff are specifically trained in safeguarding children and young people with a range of disabilities and take a proactive approach to any concerns. They always work closely and very effectively 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. Consequently, there are no incidents of bullying or targeting and children and young people feel extremely safe and are safe at this home.

The young people confirm that the rules at this home are fair and good behaviour and effort is positively reinforced, which has the desired effect. The staff team's 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. This highly experienced staff team also have the proven ability to enable children and young people to take appropriate risks to promote their independence.

Comments from parents include, 'it's a great service which makes it easy for me to relax and recharge my batteries knowing how well my daughter is being looked after'; 'the manager and staff are wonderful. When my child is here I can relax and have some time for myself and my other children. I have nothing but praise for the team'; and 'my son gets professional care here and we know he is safe. The staff match the level of interest and care of parents.'

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. The staff files in the home are exceptionally well maintained including, for example, individual training records dating back to 2004 when the home opened. The Registered Manager has also scrutinised all the main files held centrally and confirms that they all include the legally required information.

## **Leadership and management**

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

This home is extremely well managed by a suitably qualified, highly experienced and



child-focused individual who provides clear direction, good quality supervision and excellent on-going support to her staff.

This service is very well resourced and clearly demonstrates an excellent capacity for continued improvement. The most significant recent developments include: the two deputies undertaking a level 5 qualification in management to further their career opportunities; and, the whole staff team benefiting from completing all their mandatory courses together in the home over a week. This means, for example, they could use their own moving and handling equipment and practice fire evacuation procedures relevant to the needs of individual children and young people. Moreover, it proved to be an excellent team building exercise. Regular parenting courses are also now firmly established enabling parents to gain strategies to meet their children's frequently changing needs and challenges in a safe, supportive and empowering environment.

Staff are noticeably extremely happy in their respective roles and are genuinely proud of the children and young people's exceptional achievements. Consequently, morale, commitment and motivation are particularly high. Comments include, 'I am very happy working here. It's a great team that work well together and there is great support from the manager' and, 'It's such a good place to work. I love working here. The staff and the young people are great.'

This is a particularly stable and very experienced staff team who all have the required qualifications for their respective roles and a wide range of backgrounds and relevant skills including nursing and fostering. 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.

Comments from children and young people about individual members of staff include, 'she is very artistic. She helps me to draw pictures'; 'we love listening to her play her tenor horn at our Christmas party'; 'she helps us with our homework and baking'; and 'she helped me to settle here and always has things ready for me when I arrive. She has a nice smile and always laughs at my jokes.'

Other professionals describe this staff team as, 'professional, receptive, friendly, approachable, skilled and knowledgeable.' They also confirm, 'excellent communication and joint working to create a co-ordinated and seamless approach to each child's care' and 'this staff team have always been versatile in their approach and willing to share information with other professionals and services to assist the child and family as well as take on board new recommendations and advice.'

Well established, robust and highly effective monitoring processes are in place. Consequently, there were no requirements or recommendations made at the last interim inspection on 19 March 2013. Moreover, there are no regulatory shortfalls arising from this inspection.

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.

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, outstanding progress and achievements and future goals. Support plans in particular are extremely personalised and child-centred, providing very clear and detailed directions about their preferred care. For example, 'I like individual plates for each different food. I like my bedroom door left open at night with a night light on.' All these specific requests are positively and enthusiastically responded to.

## 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* and the evaluation schedule for the inspection of children's homes.