

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Fiona Parker
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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 registered to provide care and accommodation for up to five boys aged between 11 and 17 years. The home provides care for young people who may need support with emotional and behavioural difficulties. The home aims to support young people return to family, move to foster carers or live in the home until they are ready to live independently.

Overall effectiveness

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

Young people make exceptional progress in the home in a number of key areas, notably educational achievements, reducing challenging behaviours and keeping safe. Young people are extremely positive about their care, support and experiences in the home. Importantly young people are able to draw very favourable comparisons from previous experiences which supports them settle and feel safe in this home. The staff team maintain a focus on young people's needs and are genuinely motivated to help young people succeed. A particular strength is the long-term commitment to young people when they move to independence or alternative placements. One social worker commented this is an 'excellent placement' and described the staff as 'extremely committed and above an average level'.

There are some areas to improve from this visit, mainly in the detail of some monitoring reports to ensure the quality of care for young people is explicitly monitored. The quality of some records to ensure they are legible for young people in the future and achieve the minimum qualification for all existing staff. In addition a plan should be developed to capture the assessed and on-going developments for the home. This is so the manager is able to measure progress against objectives ensuring quality of care continues to improve and is accountable.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure there is a written development plan, reviewed annually, for the future of the home (NMS 15.2)

- ensure there are clear and effective procedures for monitoring and controlling the activities in the home. In particular Regulation 34 reports are sufficiently detailed and monitor records (NMS 21.1)
- ensure information about the child is recorded clearly and in a way which will be helpful to the child when they access their files now or in the future (NMS 22.5)
- ensure all staff understand, share and implement the home's ethos, philosophy and approach to caring for children. In particular promote all opportunities for young people's learning and awareness of cultural differences (NMS 3.4)
- ensure all existing staff have attained a minimum level 3 qualification (NMS 18.5)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people make significant progress in all aspects of their lives, which they themselves can recognise. Education is highly valued and as a result young people achieve excellent personal goals such as re-integrating to mainstream education placements and achieving full-time attendance in school. As a consequence young people can maximise opportunities, gain on lost time and achieve positive results. One young person said school is 'excellent', another 'I enjoy school'. Young people benefit from rich opportunities to socialise and learn from leisure and educational opportunities through engaging in local clubs, sports, holidays and school trips. In addition young people enjoy day-to-day family activities of walks, parks, shopping trips, playing cards and games, thus promoting positive experiences of family life. Ample opportunities arise for young people to express their feelings and staff are at hand to support young people express concerns, anxieties and worries. The staff team understand each young person's family histories and experiences, which enables tailored responses to any fears and worries they express. Life books and family trees help young people make sense of their lives and continue an on-going record for the future. Maintaining significant relationships for young people is very important and a key strength. Good relationships and contact arrangements are fully promoted with all people who are significant to young people. Young people fully benefit from the security, stability and sense of consistency this provides both now and for their longer-term relationships and support in adulthood.

Young people clearly benefit from a sense of belonging, being cared for and valued as an individual. As a result they progress in all other aspects of their lives, for example no longer requiring additional support in some aspects. Young people grow in confidence which has a positive impact in how they manage difficulties, tackle disappointment and promote themselves in group situations. Where young people have particular needs the staff team ensure they do not experience disadvantage and strongly advocate for assessments and services to maximise their opportunities. Close working partnerships ensure young people benefit from a consistent multi-agency approach, a social worker commented 'there is a profound awareness' of a young person's individual needs and the 'Registered Manager works very closely with me and others'.

Excellent practice ensures young people enjoy positive health and lead healthy lifestyles. There is an educative approach to help young people understand the benefits for them of enjoying good health, for example how diet improves skin and hair. Young people demonstrate good awareness of their health needs and progress in key areas in their health plans. Staff make good use of specialist therapeutic knowledge to support each individual and respond to changing needs.

Quality of care

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

Young people say 'I get on with all staff and I get help with anything I need'. Young people feel involved and consulted about all aspects of their lives. As a result they quickly settle in the home and want to stay long term, which the majority of young people do. Many young people remain in touch with staff and view this as their home to return to for advice, guidance and support as an adult. Young people's views include, this home 'is one of the best as they treat you like family', 'if I want something they say we will talk about it, and I will get an answer' and 'I don't need to complain'. Equally the manager and staff view young people as part of the family and have high aspirations for them to succeed and achieve. 'I have the same expectations for them as I have for my own children or grandchildren'. The strength of the relationships keeps any difficulties in perspective and allows for positive progress through challenging periods. As a result young people learn more positive ways to express their emotions resulting in a decreasing number of incidents. A social worker comments 'they manage behaviour exceptionally'. Warm and positive responses encourage young people to behave respectfully, consider others' feelings and learn tolerance. Young people feel they are treated fairly and equally, in turn this supports them feeling tolerant to others.

Staff consciously challenge any discrimination young people may face and ensure they are not disadvantaged or an inappropriate focus in any community disputes, 'we will defend young people where we need to'. Young people benefit and respond positively in return to this level of interest and protection for them as individuals. Young people's needs are the central focus in the home and they are consulted in planning and day-to-day arrangements, for example requesting who supports them as key worker, choosing decorations in the home and being involved in purchases in the home. Young people feel involved in their plans and can express themselves confidently, consequently young people feel they have a clear say in what happens and they understand their plans.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Safeguarding young people is a priority, young people's welfare is very important and central to practice. Young people are supported to learn how to keep themselves safe and learn about the risks and potential risks, behaviours and actions may lead to. Where particular risks are identified prompt communication takes place with social workers to consider appropriate responses. In addition advice is sought from the local safeguarding board, as appropriate. The manager considers what local resources may further support young people, for example individual work on personal safety. Staff spend a great deal of time talking through any identified concerns to develop young people's own understanding of concerns and the reasons adults are concerned. As a result young people's risk-taking behaviours reduce and they feel cared for and protected.

Staff take a pro-active approach to putting boundaries in place in the community, as any good parent would. For example actively meeting local people or parents and discussing expectations and individual young people's safety, where appropriate to do so. Young people's particular vulnerabilities are understood and staff employ vigilance and strategies in line with risk assessments. Regular training ensures staff keep up-to-date with safeguarding and protecting young people. Good multi-agency working and protocols ensure a holistic approach to safeguarding. This ensures all agencies are vigilant and work to current plans to offer protection for young people.

Young people quickly settle and respond to boundaries which significantly reduces the likelihood of absences and any influence to engage in absences. Rewards and incentives promote positive behaviours, sanctions are not punitive or over used. One young person said 'I have never had a sanction'. Physical interventions are very rarely used and quickly cease to be a strategy with young people once they settle in the home.

Further safeguards in recruitment processes protect young people from unsuitable adults working in the home. Good checks and maintenance arrangements ensure the home is physically safe and is kept safe.

Leadership and management

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

A comprehensive Statement of Purpose outlines the aims and objectives of the service. The home is operating in line with this statement and the principles are understood by interested parties, including young people. There are good numbers of staff available and flexibility in the staff team ensures young people's needs are a priority. Staff feel well supported and report regular supervision gives opportunity to discuss their role and responsibilities. Staff are trained in all core areas and a training plan covers identified needs and refresher courses. The majority of staff are qualified and all are experienced with working long term with young people. Staff turn over is very low and no changes of staff have occurred for sometime. Young people benefit from consistency and security.

Regular monitoring of the home's operations ensures quality of care continues to meet young people's needs. Although it is clear regular monitoring of care takes place, less attention is paid to monitoring records and plans therefore Regulation 34 reports are not sufficiently detailed. Clear knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses is identified and there are a number of measures in place to address weaknesses. The home is planning future developments, investing finances to improve what the home offers and expanding some aspects of service. Although the lack of a development plan means objectives and any progress is not explicit. The Registered Manager, supported by a deputy manager, however do maintain very close overview of each individual young person and the running of the home.

Appropriate action has been taken to address the previous action, recommendations and a number of other improvements. Risk assessments are clearer, strategies and equality and diversity practice more explicit in records. Although daily there is some very good work to expand young people's tolerance to differences not all opportunities to further this are maximised to full advantage when they naturally arise in day-to-day discussions. Records are generally clear and are securely stored to protect young people's confidentiality, sensitive information is afforded additional measures.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.