

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Stephen Trainor
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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

A private organisation operates this children's home. This service is registered for one young person aged between 11 and 17 years of age. The home cares for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Overall effectiveness

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

All the young people receive a good standard of care and this means they commit to their placements, work hard, take responsibility for their behaviour, achieve and develop to reach their potential. Individuals are clear about their placement arrangements, being aware of plans and programmes. This service has been successful in providing specialist support for children and young people with particular needs. Some mother and baby support was agreed by Ofsted and staff practice evolved to achieve a positive outcome. Young people receive good quality support during short term placements and this stabilises behaviours. This service is responsive to individual's presenting circumstances.

Relationships between young people and between staff and young people are good and each young person provides their full cooperation. Young people state that they feel safe while living at the home. There is a good standard of safeguarding afforded to residents from clear and agreed strategies and protocols that staff implement.

Young people's efforts are rewarded and clear incentives help to change behaviours. Young people are cared for by an experienced, competent, and motivated team of staff. Staff are not yet fully up-to-date with professional and legal developments following extensive changes to inspection frameworks. The promotion of young people's health and well-being is excellent. Contact arrangements are coordinated well. The home supports young people's education with best fit arrangements. Accessing local authority education provision for short term placements can be challenging.

Recreational interests are supported very well and rich and varied experiences increase young people's self confidence. Staff practice affords young people opportunities for positive engagement in the local community. This is especially important when young people have experienced a range of placements outside their home town and need to re-establish links.

Young people gain important life skills from the start of their placement and develop self-knowledge, self-help skills and improve their self-esteem by the time they leave the home. Young people start to fulfil their potential from well-managed placements that are subject to frequent review. There is good liaison with partners supporting

placements during reviews but outside this forum partners views are not being captured fully. A robust body of evidence is not available to support the monitoring of staff practice and develop the home.

The young people are relaxed within their home. The home's environment is very supportive and underpinned by defined boundaries. Young people's views are consistently gathered and these influence the home's operation and future direction. Young people are involved in decision making that has an impact on all aspects of their lives. The key worker role provides effective support.

The home's aims and objectives are being fulfilled but there are some minor changes needed to a few management systems. Regulation 33 and 34 monitoring reports do not provide an in-depth analysis of information and partners views and this can restrict weaknesses from being identified.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure clear and effective procedures are in place for monitoring and controlling the activities of the home; specifically, demonstrate how information within Regulation 33 & 34 reports, including the captured views of children and partners, is being evaluated and used to promote continuous improvement and development (NMS 21.1)
- ensure the home's learning and development programme keeps staff up to date with professional and legal developments; in particular, the new inspection framework, evaluation schedule and grade descriptors and revised regulations and minimum standards (NMS 18.1)
- ensure the views, wishes and feelings of partners and those significant to children including independent reviewing officers is taken into account when monitoring staff and developing the home. (NMS 1.7)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people experience stable placements and make progress in many areas, including their social presentation, self-awareness and taking responsibility for their behaviour. As a result young people develop and mature. The young people are confident in their placements. Good progress is being made by residents and they are able to make responsible and mature decisions. Young people rate the support they receive very highly when talking about their placement experience.

Young people achieve personal goals and this helps them to develop a better

understanding and appreciation of their personal circumstances. It is clear that young people can motivate themselves, especially to attend meetings where they express their views with some confidence. The young people are optimistic about their futures and are fully aware of any plans that affect them.

Young people living at the home are treated fairly and staff practice is capable of supporting their individual needs. Staff have the skills, motivation and abilities to form positive working relationships with young people and sustain them. Young people gain tremendous benefits from high levels of emotional support they receive. This is particularly evident in maintaining relationships with family members.

Each young person's educational potential is supported by proactive staff practice and there are opportunities for the young people to attend different educational placements including local colleges, schools and special schools. Sometimes challenges are created by the specific nature of services provided at this home. There can be delays in setting up suitable educational arrangements for short term or emergency placements. Staff recognise how achievements improve self-confidence and future prospects.

Young people enjoy good health and mainly follow a healthy lifestyle. Smoking cessation programme forms part of the home's response to support young people's personal, social, health and education training. They take responsibility for their health and make clear links between diet and exercise. Regular activities including fitness training and gym ensure they remain physically active. All young people are familiar with their health arrangements, are aware of the contents of their health plans and attend their appointments with health professionals. There is consideration for young people to administer their own medicines. Risk assessments support safe practice and young people have safe storage provision.

Pathway and 'after care' plans are introduced at the correct age and stage of placement. These arrangements were not applicable for the young people living at the home. This inspection confirmed that young people are well-prepared for the transition to other placements. Young people gain many competencies and life skills through good quality experiences provided by in-house independence and social skills training programmes. Programmes encourage good social presentation skills which are clearly identifiable in how young people conduct themselves at the home and in the surrounding community. Opportunities presented to young people to make a positive contribution within the local community are to be further developed by the home's management.

Quality of care

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

Young people enjoy good relationships with staff which enable them to engage positively and make good choices, for example, keeping themselves safe and learning how to change behaviours. Staff are skilled and show great insight and understanding of young people's needs. As a result young people appreciate and

value the efforts of staff and work closely with them to plan their futures. Staff connect very well with young people and this means they are confident to express their views especially during statutory reviews. Staff practice supports young people to maximise their contributions. Individual plans are of a high quality reflecting young people's needs and charting their progress.

The home's management sets realistic targets for short-term placements and has had good success in implementing plans. Young people make big improvements in their behaviour and all are relaxed, happy and confident in their placements. Equality and diversity are well established within the culture and ethos of the home and this means there are many opportunities to develop self-knowledge, self-help skills and improve their self-esteem. Partnership arrangements are good, and communication between staff, young people and their parents, social workers and other professionals is clear and effective.

Developing educational potential forms a clear part of the home's philosophy of care. Care staff emphasise the importance of young people gaining a good education and support continuous learning and development on a daily basis. Relationships with the local education authority are established and this allows young people to access appropriate services. Many of the young people have had disjointed education experiences in the past and this means lengthy discussions are sometimes needed to access 'best fit' arrangements.

Young people understand how to make a complaint. They confirm that complaints, if made, would be responded to in full. A written guide covers complaints, with information, guidance and contact details of agencies such as Ofsted, children's rights and the Children's Rights Director. Young people can differentiate between grumbles and serious complaints.

Healthy lifestyles are promoted. The key worker role is well developed to deliver health promotion work. Medication can be stored safely, and records are maintained on the administration of medication including prescribed and non-prescription medication when used. Young people were fit and healthy and no medication was being used. There are clear policies and procedural guidance and these are followed in practice. All staff receive suitable training to support health and well-being and this maintains the quality of care being provided. There are good collaborative links with many different health professionals and agencies. This allows helpful guidance and support to be provided when young people are most in need.

Staff engage young people in a range of activities to develop individual potential and enhance learning opportunities. Young people's aspirations are supported and a suitable budget enables them to pursue their hobbies and interests.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people confirm that they are safe living at the home. They learn to accept

responsibility for their behaviour, show initiative and understand how they contribute to the home's operation. Young people develop skills that enable them to differentiate their behaviour according to the different settings and situations they find themselves in. Young people's personalities prosper at this home.

Young people understand the many forms that bullying can take and are equally clear about what to do if they have any concerns. Young people say that bullying is not an issue of concern to them either within the home or when allowed out into the community. They have confidence that staff will respond to any concerns they have.

Young people have suitable safeguarding and complaints information and they are aware of the content of this information and acknowledge that they will not suffer any recrimination if complaints and grumbles are made. Policy and procedural guidance is consistent with that of the local safeguarding team's protocols. Staff receive regular training to update their knowledge and have a good understanding of safeguarding policies, procedures and actions they should take when an incident arises.

Systems for dealing with young people who go missing from home are well established and a protocol is set out. Risk assessments take account of a young person's potential to go missing. A number of reports relating to an ex-resident had been made. A suitable response was coordinated to a point in time crisis. There are no concerns relating to how the home manages the young people's behaviour. Standard practice is to provide young people with the opportunity to reflect on incidents they are involved in.

Staff uphold children's rights. Young people respond very well to praise and there is good use of positive reinforcement as opposed to the use of sanctions. Very few sanctions are used. Respectful communication and an excellent atmosphere were maintained throughout the inspection. Staff are clear that physical intervention is very much a last resort. There were no incidents between inspections. All staff receive regular and refresher training in positive handling techniques.

Young people benefit from an experienced and stable staff team. Changes made to the staffing structure between inspections were to provide familiar faces to young people requiring a short term placement. Changes proved to be effective in allowing young people to settle very quickly. Recruitment practice is robust ensuring only suitable people work with young people. Equally good practice ensures the vetting of visitors to safeguard young people. No concerns were identified with the home's recruitment procedures.

Health and safety is managed well ensuring young people and staff remain safe. Regular servicing of equipment and routine safety checks maintain a safe environment. Young people know what to do in the case of an emergency and can exit the home safely. Staff implement a range of risk assessments to identify and minimise hazards.

Leadership and management

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

Young people develop meaningful and lasting attachments from the supportive management culture and the hard work of the staff. Young people are gaining tremendous benefits from placement experiences being provided by a motivated team of staff providing good quality care. It is a strong, child-focused service that is conducive to young people developing their potential. This service is managed by an experienced and fully qualified manager. An experienced deputy manager is available in the absence of the registered manager. Partners confirm communication is effective. Permanent records are produced to show how children's developmental needs are being met.

There is a clear vision for how the home should operate. Some practice adjustments continue to be made in line with a new inspection framework, new evaluation schedule, and new national minimum standards. All levels of staff can influence and shape the service with their ideas. Practice is developed by a management team that is perceptive in identifying the home's strengths and the areas where it could perform better. Staff are encouraged to bring forward initiatives. An accurate verbal self-assessment of the service was outlined by the Registered Manager and a senior manager representing the responsible organisation.

The views of the young people, staff, family members and partners are not fully captured during visits made to the home under the requirements of Regulations 33 and 34. Visits do provide a snapshot in time of what it is like to live in the home but do not sufficiently evaluate and analyse all processes and data to fully support continuous improvement. Some realistic and challenging targets are outlined within the home's development plan. There is some evaluation of this plan and this contributes to controlling the home's activities. New ways of gathering the views, wishes and feelings of partners and those significant to children including independent reviewing officers are being planned. This information will also help to identify where future improvements can be made.

Individuals' needs, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are being met. The young people have full confidence in their staff and know who is responsible for them at all times of the day and night. Staffing levels are maintained and a good gender balance is evident within the team. Staff's skills are clearly being matched to the needs of young people. Appropriate decisions had been made when making changes to the staff team. Staff from the responsible organisations other homes are occasionally moved if they have knowledge of young people being placed and are better placed to support the individual's needs.

Records at this home show good clarity in how staff are managed. Detailed induction and foundation training are provided. Staff confirm that supervision is taking place. Staff have relevant qualifications to at least National Vocational Qualification at level 3. New staff appointments have access to diploma training. Training covering changes to inspection frameworks, evaluation schedule and grade descriptors is still to be delivered. Systems for staff personal development and appraisal are well

established and this helps staff to improve their skills sets.

Young people's placements are stable and the home's service history shows a good record in compliance. There were four requirements made at a monitoring inspection to the home. These linked to a specific mother and baby service and ensuring the building was fit for purpose. Mother and baby have since moved on following a positive placement experience. Recommendations made at previous inspections had also been responded to in full and this allowed young people opportunities to manage their own medication. Fire precautions were also strengthened by undertaking practice fire drills at night. There is a system in place to notify persons and appropriate authorities of the occurrence of significant events. There were no reports between inspections. Suitable action was taken with regard to past incidents. Past records are to a professional standard, being kept safe and secure.

Staff practice is supported by good written guidance, policies and procedures. The responsible organisation has accessible information that is written in plain English. The home's Statement of Purpose provides information in accordance with regulations. The ethos and working practices of the home clearly meets aims and objectives and this means young people acquire an appreciation of and respect for their own and other cultures. This service is responsive to the needs of children and young people being introduced via many different routes.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.