

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Michelle Spruce
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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 for two young people of either sex between the ages of eight and 17 years with emotional or behavioural difficulties. However, the home only provides care for one young person at any one time, unless the two children are siblings and it is considered appropriate for them to share a bedroom. Admissions to the home are usually planned but emergency admissions are accepted.

The home is situated in a residential area on the outskirts of a town.

Overall effectiveness

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

This is a good service that delivers individualised, well planned care personalised to the needs of individuals. Positive outcomes for young people are a result of a dedicated and skilled staff team who are consistent in delivering high quality care. This is effective because staff have a thorough understanding of young people's needs and are continually striving to promote their maximum potential. Safeguarding is exceptional within the home and young people are protected at all times.

There is a strong culture of trust and respect that encompasses the true value of relationships between the manager, staff and young people. This is reflected in the positive behaviour of young people that has changed significantly. The views and wishes of young people clearly influence the home management, thus empowering young people to speak freely. This has developed confidence and self belief. There are some short falls in record keeping where information is not consistent from one document to another, also, the home would benefit from a clear development plan. As a result, one requirement and one recommendation has been raised.

Areas for improvementStatutory Requirements

This section sets out the actions which must be taken so that the registered person/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Reg.	Requirement	Due date
28 (2001)	maintain in respect of each child who is accommodated in a children's home a record in permanent form which is kept up to date, this is in particular relation to the pathway plan and the placement plan. (Regulation 28(1)(a))	31/07/2011

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, either identifying any planned changes in the operation or resources of the service, or confirming the continuation of the home's current operation and resource. (NMS 15.2)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people make good progress from their starting point in all aspects of their care. There is an exceptional improvement in the self esteem and self view of young people who have experienced complex difficulties during their life. Through robust care planning the staff team have enabled young people to become confident and accepting of who they are. As a result young people have achieved recognition of themselves and what they want to achieve. Young people are encouraged and supported to maintain healthy lifestyles, this includes, physical, emotional and psychological wellbeing. The staff team are pro-active and motivate young people to look after themselves; as a result young people make requests for support with any health issues to maintain their health. Young people benefit highly from access to support services, this means there is continuous support and monitoring to improve and maintain a good life balance.

There are good systems in place to support young people who do not access school. Staff work hard and encourage young people to achieve no matter what their circumstances and work closely with school to offer the best possible provision of support. For example, maths and English are covered as mandatory curriculum subjects also other life skill subjects such as; budgeting, cooking, and money management provide opportunities for learning and development. As a result young people achieve and develop skills this gives them confidence to continue to aim higher in further education.

Young people benefit from contact with close family and friends and others who are important to them. There are clear and supportive measures in place that safeguard against any potential risk. This means young people can enjoy the freedom to spend time with those who they are close to while still remaining safe. The care planning and placement plan are very good and outline the support for preparation into adulthood providing life skill targets. There is a pathway plan; however there are some discrepancies between this and the placement plan. For example it is not clear if young people have received a clear diagnosis of specific learning needs, as a result support measures have not been provided, and this means young people may

become labelled incorrectly or may feel hindered due to lack of intervention.

Quality of care

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

The home provides a good quality of care. Young people thrive from the positive relationships they have with staff. From their starting point young people have made substantial progress supported by a highly effective staff team. Through continuous interaction and one-to-one support young people freely express their view and wishes. This means that the running of the home is influenced by their decision making. The service delivery focuses highly on the welfare of young people and they understand that staff are concerned for them individually. As a result of the strong relationship bonds young people feel valued and listened to both from internal and external support. Young people say, 'everything is good about the home, I wouldn't change anything'. Staff address minor niggles through regular meetings where young people can raise issues, these are addressed before they become complaints. The home has not received any complaints since the last inspection and there is a clear child friendly guide on how to complain should they wish to do so.

Staff fully understand the needs of young people in their care. There are robust care plans in place that are clear and concise. Individualised placement planning ensures that the delivery of care is met and exceeded and young people are actively involved in contributing to them. A recent compliment was made from an external partner who said, 'I'm impressed with the knowledge and understanding of staff involvement with young people's care'.

The support young people receive in making progress in education is good. There is clear progress made from their starting point which means that however small the steps young people are still able to achieve. The home is very proactive in engaging with schools to support and maintain achievement and attendance. This means that young people still achieve no matter what their circumstances are. There are a variety of activities provided by the home that provide a stimulating and encouraging social involvement. Young people are provided with a range of activities to meet their social, physical and emotional needs. The staff work hard to develop support strategies that develop positive behaviour. As a result young people develop skills in managing conflict. This means they develop positive relationships irrespective of the barriers they experience.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Safety is at the heart of all aspects of care received by young people. Staff are vigilant in ensuring that young people are protected from potential harm or abuse. They monitor and risk manage all activities to maintain young people's safety. This means young people can take part in activities in a controlled way without feeling

restricted. The vigilant response staff have in monitoring episodes of missing from care along with the exceptional relationships with young people, means that the occasions in which young people go missing has been significantly reduced. Where young people used to go missing frequently, staff supported them on return with lots of verbal praise and provided a rewards system to encourage positive behaviour, as a result young people recognised the behaviour and declined the episodes of missing. As a result their vulnerability to abuse is reduced. Young people are safe and say they are safe, one young person commented about the home saying, 'It's the only place I have ever felt safe'.

There are robust and detailed care plans in place that clearly outline how risk is to be managed. This means that safety is continually monitored and evaluated to maximise the safety of young people. Records demonstrate that there is no risk of bullying and the home has a policy that states that bullying in any form will not be tolerated. Positive behaviour is driven by a skilled and motivated staff team who's objectives to keep young people safe is paramount. As a result of innovative practice staff have developed strategies in reducing offending behaviour that puts young people at risk, by providing activities such as, beauty treatments, incentive charts and reinforcement of praise for positive behaviour. Young people remain safe and understand how to manage their own skills in safeguarding.

The home works really well with external partners such as the police to ensure that they are fully aware of the needs of young people placed. There is a detailed information sheet provided to police regarding all young people residing at the home. This ensures that police are efficient and effective in responding to any issues that present and put young people at risk. High risk activities are assessed and measures imposed to promote the young people's safety, as a result young people have benefited from overnight stays and contact with people who are significant in their lives.

Leadership and management

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

Young people benefit from skilled and well trained staff team who are supported by their manager to a satisfactory standard. The home is monitored by the manager and external monitoring completed by person's not carrying on the day to day running of the home. This ensures that the home is efficiently and effectively managed. Young people are consulted with during the regulation 33 monitoring visits, this means their view and opinions are formally documented and acted upon. During a previous regulation 33 visit a young person commented, 'I feel very happy and safe and understand why I need help and guidance'. The deputy manager completes the regulation 34 monitoring under the supervision of the manager, this means staff development is supported through opportunities to develop skills. Although the home is closely monitored and all records are checked by the manager there are some records that are not consistent in the content from one to another. For example, the placement plan has no reference to young people having a specific

learning disability but the pathway plan makes reference to an assessment for one. This means young people's needs may not be met due to inconsistencies in record keeping and may hinder the additional support required. The home does not have a clear written development for the future of the home that demonstrates the strength's and weakness. However staff do understand the home's ideas and aspirations that are discussed in meetings but there is no supporting document that clearly outlines and defines this.

The staff receive appropriate training and are skilled in understanding the needs of young people. There is a training matrix in place outlining both mandatory and additional training planned and undertaken for staff. This ensures that they are skilled and competent to deliver the required support to young people tailored to their individual needs. Staff receive monthly supervision and benefit from an annual appraisal and are kept up to date with professional and legal developments. The staffing levels are appropriate to support young people. All staff are adequately vetted prior to employment, this ensures young people are protected from potential harm or abuse. The home is adequately resourced, indicating the financial viability of the provider.

There are systems in place to monitor the safety of the home and regular fire drills and tests are completed along with routine gas and electricity inspections. This means young people, staff and visitors to the home are safe from potential risks from the environment.

Young people have trusting relationships with the manager and are comfortable and thrive in the care setting. This is a result of the values and culture that is bred from a dedicated and child focused staff team.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.