

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Debbie Foster
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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

This is a private children's home, the owner is also the Registered Manager. The home provides care for up to six young people between the ages of five to 18 years. The home cares for young people within a group living setting.

Overall effectiveness

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

Young people benefit from good levels of close individual support. They are happy and make good, continual progress. This is confirmed by professionals involved with the home who say that young people thrive there. One professional commented 'the journey the young person has been on has been so positive, they have exceeded expectations' and another said, 'young people receive consistent care and are nurtured, they want to stay at the home and they are happy.'

Young people make positive and trusting relationships with staff which helps them to feel happy and settled. Their specific health needs are fully met and they enjoy a healthy lifestyle. Staff significantly encourage and support young people with their education. They attend school on a daily basis which maximises their potential for achievement. Young people are encouraged to practise and develop their life skills and they take part in a wide range of activities that promote their social skills and support their general development. They benefit from living in a homely environment that is safe.

The home is soundly managed and there is a clear commitment to continuous improvement of the service for the benefit of young people. Staff are trained and competent. They have a good understanding of the specific needs of the young people they look after and they are committed to ensuring that young people are well cared for.

Recommendations have been made as a result of this visit to further improve the home's environment, staff training and supervision, to improve outcomes for children and young people.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure all staff are provided with regular supervision by appropriately qualified

and experienced staff (NMS 19.4)

- improve the environment to provide a more comfortable and homely environment that is well maintained. In particular the carpets in the hallway and lounge and additional homely touches (NMS 10.3)
- keep staff up-to-date with professional and practice developments that reflects the policies and needs of the home. In particular refresher training in behaviour management, the use of physical interventions and first aid. (NMS 18.1)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people benefit from well planned care which is highly personalised to their individual and specific needs. They are very well supported to develop an understanding of their lives, achieve stability and effectively plan for their future. Young people are provided with the right opportunities to achieve their potential based upon their individual and diverse needs. The effectiveness of this approach is evident in the excellent progress young people are making in their lives.

Young people are healthy and enjoy healthy lifestyles. Some take responsibility for their own health, making their own appointments and taking regular exercise. Others are supported to attend health care appointments, enjoying healthy diets, and taking regular exercise. Young people have access to a range of routine and specialist health services and they receive excellent support, information and guidance about any health problems. This means young people are empowered to make informed and educated decisions about their health.

Young people's participation in education is exceptionally good. Barriers to young people's education are consistently challenged and education packages quickly put in place before they return to a full-time education placement. Young people who have missed a lot of school are actively supported to return to the learning environment. Others have progressed into further education. Young people understand the importance of learning and are making good choices about how to develop their abilities and skills through education. As a result, young people's achievements are significant given their starting point when they came to live in the home. For example, two young people have been recognised as 'gifted and talented' at their school.

Young people benefit from appropriate and well managed contact with their family and other important people in their lives. Staff support young people both emotionally and practically to ensure contact is safe and as positive an experience as possible. Young people confirm this. They say they have been supported to, 'keep in touch with their family' and 'my aunt is coming for the first time today.' Young people are encouraged to develop independence skills appropriate to their age, ability and level of understanding. Young people are routinely involved in running the house including cooking, washing pots, cleaning their rooms, tidying and doing their own washing.

Quality of care

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

Young people benefit from good care plan packages which are updated on a regular basis by the staff together with the young person. All cultural and religious needs are identified and addressed. Staff have established safe and productive links with a local place of worship. An independent reviewing officer said, 'young people settle well here and respond to the consistency of being cared for in a nurturing environment.' Young people feel involved and consulted about all aspects of their lives, including their plans, which they are involved in from the start of the introduction process. As a result they quickly settle in and want to stay long term. Young people do well because the manager and staff have high aspirations for the young people to succeed and achieve whilst also feeling comfortable and happy.

Young people learn to behave respectfully, show consideration for each other's differences and develop tolerance from the encouragement and positive responses they receive from staff. Strong, supportive and nurturing relationships are built between staff and young people which enable inappropriate behaviour to be challenged and positive behaviour to be built upon and celebrated. A young person said, 'the best thing about the home is the staff they are all kind'. A staff member said 'we make sure we give lots of praise, reinforcing when the young people have done well, as well as when they make mistakes.' 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 communicate their feelings and emotions resulting in a decreasing number of incidents.

Young people's needs are the central focus for all staff members and they are consistently consulted in day-to-day arrangements, for example, daily activities, trips, celebrations, contact visits, personalising their bedrooms and being involved in choosing purchases for the home. A clear complaints procedure is fully understood and implemented by young people and staff members. Staff effectively address disagreements between young people before they reach the formal complaint process. As a result, young people learn how to manage relationships and conflict in a positive manner.

Young people live in homely environment which they like and say 'this is my home'. They consider the home to be comfortably furnished and they particularly like having their own bedroom. However, some areas are showing signs of wear and tear; these include carpets in the hallway and lounge. The lounge does not have many homely touches, lacking pictures, ornaments and soft furnishings, which makes the room look bare and not as comfortable as other areas in the home. The home is well located with easy access to local amenities and public transport and young people have the increased benefit of having a minibus for their use. This assists them in accessing local activities, visiting friends and family.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people live in a safe environment where they are effectively protected from harm. Young people say they 'feel safe', but if they had any concerns they would 'talk to staff'. Staff are trained in safeguarding and know how to recognise, respond to and report suspected abuse. Young people are protected by staff having a very good knowledge of the risks that are specific to each young person. These are supported by a range of detailed risk assessments and procedures that staff consistently put into practice to promote young people's safety and well-being.

Young people who go missing from home benefit from immediate action and strategies being implemented by the staff to have them return home safely and their welfare protected. There are strong links with the community police. Staff always respond positively when a young person returns making sure they are safe and get the support they need. Young people are effectively protected from bullying, intimidation and harassment. Young people say they do not have a problem with bullying, but if they did they could talk to staff.

There is a calm and caring approach to behaviour management, which means young people's challenging behaviour is sensitively and effectively managed. Staff view young people positively and effectively use positive relationships, reward and praise to maintain a calm and supportive environment that is suitable for young people with complex emotional difficulties. Young people say, 'I have not been given a sanction for poor behaviour', that 'staff are fair' and that they 'receive rewards for positive behaviour.' Few sanctions and physical interventions have taken place and appropriate records are kept. Staff take a non-confrontational approach to supporting young people through troubled times, ensuring they are treated with sensitivity and respect. This approach enables staff to understand why young people are upset and identify the best ways to help them manage their behaviour.

Young people live in a physically safe environment. They are protected by a good range of health and safety procedures and risk assessments. Staff carry out regular health and safety checks, including fire drills, to ensure the premises are safe and secure and young people know what to do in case of an emergency. The recruitment and selection of people working in the home is thorough. This ensures young people are protected, safe and cared for by suitable staff.

Leadership and management

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

Young people live in a home that is managed well. The home meets the aims and objectives of its Statement of Purpose, and young people and social workers are clear about the services and support the home provides. The manager and staff demonstrate a strong commitment to delivering a high standard of childcare that places the needs of young people at the centre of their work. This has resulted in

young people making excellent progress in many aspects of their lives, including emotional stability, resilience, personal growth, education, behaviour management and relationships.

Appropriate action has been taken to address the majority of previous recommendations. These include; the sanction and restraint records, they now hold all the required information as set out in the regulations. All risk assessments have been regularly reviewed to check the implementation and effectiveness of the actions identified. However, not all staff are receiving regular supervision to fully support them in their work with young people.

The operation of the home is well monitored, which improves the quality of care for young people. The home can demonstrate its capacity for improvement, based upon its good track record, performance and continued compliance with standards and regulations. The home has a development plan in place, which sets out identifies accurately areas for potential development for the benefit of young people.

Young people are cared for by a sufficient number of qualified and experienced staff, to meet their needs. There are opportunities for all staff to develop their knowledge and skills through training. They are supported in their day-to-day practice to ensure they are clear about their roles and responsibilities and how the individual needs of young people are to be met. In addition, team meetings allow the whole staff team to discuss the running of the home, to reflect on young people's progress and how best to support them. Staff also make good use of external agencies to further develop their understanding of young people's needs and the best ways to help them. Training has been undertaken by staff however, some has not been updated at suitable intervals this includes behaviour management, physical intervention and first aid.

Young people's records are stored securely and provide a comprehensive picture of young people's individual needs, development and progress. Young people's progress is continually reviewed to ensure care planning and care practice is up-to-date and relevant to meeting young people's current needs.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.