

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 providing up to four placements to young people aged 11 to 17 years.

Overall effectiveness

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

Young people receive excellent individualised care from a stable, child-centred and very experienced staff team. Young people have exceedingly strong relationships with staff and feel happy and settled in the home. This helps to increase their confidence, emotional resilience and self-esteem and enables them to make significant progress overall from their starting point on entering the home. Young people are achieving success in education and they develop plans and aspirations for their future learning and employment. Young people enjoy good health and are supported very well to gain the skills they need to live independently. They feel that staff look after them well. Young people feel safe and are effectively protected from significant harm. Young people are consulted about every aspect of their daily life and their care plans. This means that they are included in all the decisions that are made about their lives. They are confident that staff take their views seriously and that their opinions matter.

The home is managed extremely effectively. The manager provides inspiring and strong leadership to staff and is fully involved in all the decisions that are made about the care and welfare of young people in the home. There are robust monitoring systems in place and prompt action is taken on any issue that is identified as part of this process, in order to drive forward improvements. Staff are supported very well and they have excellent training opportunities. This enables them to develop the knowledge and skills they need for their work and therefore to deliver a very high standard of care to young people.

One recommendation has been made as a result of this inspection. This relates to the development plan as it does not on all occasions identify clearly the specific areas for improvement or development.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- build further on the development plan, to ensure it identifies the specific changes

in the operation and resources of the service, to bring further improvement or development. (NMS 15.2)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people flourish immensely in a nurturing environment. They benefit greatly from the individualised care, and achieve stability from the support they receive. They are well cared for and valued and respected as individuals. This helps them to grow in confidence and develop a positive self view. From their starting point on admission to the home, they make significant progress in their lives. A social worker said 'the young person has come on in leaps and bounds, socially, emotionally and in education, having good relationships with the staff that have their best interests at heart. I can't fault them'.

Young people enjoy good health. Their health needs are thoroughly assessed when they come to the home and extremely detailed health plans ensure that their progress is monitored and their needs are met. They are fully supported to attend all routine and specialist health appointments. They enjoy healthy lifestyles and are encouraged to take an active interest in looking after their own health. Young people say that they eat healthily. Young people benefit from the excellent advice they are given by staff on a wide range of health and social issues including the risks attached to smoking, alcohol and substance misuse. The arrangements for delivering medication are thorough and ensure that young people are protected and have medicines when they need them in order to keep them healthy.

Young people benefit greatly from excellent school attendance. Young people who have missed a lot of school are actively supported to return to the learning environment quickly. Their achievements have grown significantly since coming to the home. One young person said that they know going to college is important to help them get a job. This demonstrates staff are supporting young people to develop aspirations for their future and work.

The daily life of the home enables young people to develop their life skills in preparation for independence. For example, they help with household chores, learn how to budget and to cook. They also learn how make their own appointments with other agencies, such as the doctor and dentist. They are able to undertake training on the safe use of the internet that is organised by the home. This is excellent practice as these opportunities help to develop young people's confidence and their knowledge and skills. Young people often keep in touch with staff after they leave the home to let staff know how they are doing. This shows that they have developed positive relationships with staff that continue after they leave care and that they feel confident that staff are interested in their welfare.

Young people benefit greatly from the support they are given to build and maintain positive contact with family and friends. This helps to reinforce their sense of their own identity as well as enabling them to keep in touch with people who are

important to them. Young people said they see their family regularly. A social worker stated that 'staff go the extra mile to facilitate and assist the young person in keeping in touch with their family. They arrange, take, wait and pick the young person up. They know that family is very important to them.'

Quality of care

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

Young people's lives are greatly enhanced by an experienced staff group who enthusiastically demonstrate their commitment to addressing young people's care and safety needs. Young people confirm this saying that, 'I can talk to staff and they always help me sort things out. They me help in the things I need to do to become independent'. 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, family visits, personalising their bedrooms and being involved in choosing purchases for the home. The staff team are persevering and supportive, continually creating opportunities for young people to reach their full potential. Staff say that they are, 'proud of their young people and their achievements'. Young people describe relationships with the staff as, 'fine' and 'good', while another described them as 'always there for us'.

Young people confirm that their views are genuinely sought and acted upon. The staff are innovative in the way that they help young people to make decisions about their lives and influence the way that the home is run. Staff provide opportunities one-to-one discussion, group chats and direct work sessions. There are also regular young people's meetings. Quality assurance monitoring by the manager includes opportunities for young people to comment upon the quality of care at the home. Young people confirm this saying that, 'staff are fair'.

A clear complaints procedure is fully understood and implemented by young people and staff members. There is clear information in the children's guide about how to complain. The staff effectively address disagreements between young people before they reach the formal complaint process. The staff handle complaints well. As a result, young people learn how to manage relationships and conflict in a positive manner.

Young people's placement plans are highly individualised and provide a comprehensive picture of young people's personal needs and the support they require. Young people confirm that staff provide care and support to them in a way that is particular to them. Staff are aided in providing good quality care by external professionals. They provide advice directly to young people and indirectly by advice supplied to the staff team, to aid positive outcomes for the young people.

Young people's needs and development are reviewed frequently in the light of their care and progress at the home. The reviewing system includes participation in the statutory reviews, internal reviews of the placement plan and discussions with the young person in direct work sessions. Social workers said that they receive weekly

communication with the staff and also receive a progress report for the young person every two weeks. Statutory case reviews take place within the required timescales to inform those working at the home and others of progress made by young people. Social workers comment that young people are 'thriving' and 'receive consistent care from staff who are passionate.'

Young people's education is a very high priority and it is vigorously promoted. Staff see it as valuable in itself and as part of the young people's preparation for adulthood. The staff work closely with education and Connexions staff to secure good quality education or placements. Staff make a lot of effort to encourage good attendance and young people are well prepared for the day. This has brought significant improvements in educational attendance for all young people. Staff's close communication and support with other professionals working in education to sustain and increase the young people's time in the provision is a notable strength. Staff provide transport and class support if needed. Young people have made good progress in increasing their grades and passing GCSE exams. There are space, resources and facilities at the home to enable the completion of homework or structured home-study programmes. A computer is available for the young people to use for educational purposes and well-monitored internet access is available.

Young people are able to pursue their particular interests and are enthusiastically supported and encouraged by staff to engage in leisure activities. Staff attempt to enable young people to socialise and to build their esteem and confidence by supporting their individual choices. There is also a good range of books, DVDs and games available for education and entertainment.

Young people live in homely environment which they say they like. They consider the home to be comfortably furnished. The interior and exterior of the home are in a good state of structural and decorative repair. There is a satisfactory maintenance and repair programme for the building, furniture and equipment, and any damage is repaired promptly. The garden is well maintained and safe. The home is clean and there are homely touches throughout. The young people live in a home that is very well located near to shops, leisure and education. It is on the main bus route to the nearby town centre.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people are extremely well safeguarded in this home. Staff have an excellent understanding of the types of situations, behaviours or activities which may present a risk to young people. They develop comprehensive individual risk assessment and management plans to address these issues and keep young people safe within a nurturing environment. Plans are kept up to date so that they reflect young people's changing needs and continue to protect them. Suitable staffing levels ensure that young people are cared for and supported at all times. Professionals involved with the home also confirm that young people are cared for safely.

Staff undertake child protection training so that they recognise the signs and symptoms of abuse. They have a good knowledge of the home's safeguarding procedure and know how to keep young people safe if a concern is identified. Professionals involved with the home all report that they are very satisfied with the arrangements that are in place to protect young people.

Young people who going 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 return 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 would tell staff and they would address this immediately.

Young people and staff enjoy excellent relationships based on mutual respect. This provides a foundation for the development of positive behaviour. Young people behave well towards one another and staff. They are supported to develop socially acceptable behaviour through encouragement and positive regard and to respect the rights of others. All staff are trained in safe methods of care and control which promote their understanding of why young people might behave in a difficult or challenging way. The training also covers physical restraint. However, physical intervention is a very rare occurrence, with no incidents taking place in since the last inspection. This confirms the effectiveness of the way staff care for young people. The use of sanctions is minimal and young people say that staff treat them fairly.

Young people are protected from individuals who might pose a risk to them in the home by the robust procedures for vetting staff and visitors. These ensure that all staff are assessed as suitable before they start work and that all visitors are checked before being allowed into the home. This ensures young people are protected, safe and cared for by suitable staff.

Young people live in a physically safe environment. They are protected by a comprehensive range of health and safety procedures and risk assessments. Checks are carried out regularly on all gas and electrical equipment. Young people are involved in fire evacuation practises so they know how to leave the home safely in the event of a fire or other emergency.

Leadership and management

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

Young people received high quality care from a stable, very experienced and skilled staff group. Young people's best interests are at the heart of what the staff do and this ensures excellent outcomes for young people. The home meets the aims and objectives of its Statement of Purpose. Young people and social workers are very clear about the services and support the home provides. The manager and staff work

in a coordinated way to provide a consistently outstanding, child-focused and individualised quality of care for young people living in the home. The effectiveness of this approach is evident in the excellent progress young people are making.

Inspiring and effective leadership from the manager, within an inclusive open style, cascades to influence staff practice, which young people benefit from. The manager has a realistic understanding of the strengths of the service and the areas for future development. Effectively monitor the quality of care takes place, including consultation with young people, and taking action to address any identified shortfalls. As a result, the home shows a capacity for continued improvement based on its performance since the last inspection, compliance with standards and regulations and improved outcomes for young people. In addition, there is an up-to-date development plan, setting out any the operation or resources of the service. However, it does not always identify specific areas for improvement for the service and how these are to be addressed. Although, the manager demonstrates that he has clear plans on how to continue to develop the service for the benefit of young people.

Staff are well supported by the manager who provides excellent leadership and guidance to ensure they fully understand their roles and responsibilities and the expectation to provide excellent childcare practice. They receive regular professional supervision. In addition, team meetings allow the whole staff team to discuss the running of the home and reflect in detail on young people's progress and how best to continue to support them.

Young people are cared for by a stable, caring and committed staff team who have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities, and the high expectations for providing excellent childcare. The numbers of staff on duty are sufficient to meet the needs of young people. The organisation has an excellent commitment to staff training. New staff are fully supported to carry out their role and benefit from a robust and structured induction. All staff have undertaken the National Vocation Qualification at level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People and mandatory training in key areas of practice. In addition, they have received more specific training to meet the emerging needs of young people in their care. For example, staff have been trained in autism, E-safety, child development, life story and social pedagogy to ensure they can best support and meet young people's individual diverse needs.

Young people's written records are securely stored. They provide a comprehensive and up-to-date picture of individual young people's experiences, needs, development and progress.

Equality and diversity practice is **outstanding**.