

Inspection report for children's home

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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 operates a service for up to five male young people. The home provides a specialist service to young people who have a range of complex needs and who can present significant risks to themselves and others. Young people have exclusive access to a registered school that is also managed by the organisation. The home is located close to several town centres with public transport facilities and local amenities close by. Currently, three young people are residing here.

Overall effectiveness

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

Young people are kept safe and protected from significant harm. They learn and practice strategies that will help safely reintroduce them to the wider community. Young people are extremely positive about the quality of care and support they receive from their staff team. Because of the nurturing they receive they interact positively with their carers. This is demonstrated through the development of exceptional relationships and trust that exists, ensuring effective social learning and problem solving can take place.

The views of young people are central to the running of the home. Young people are fully involved in the decisions that affect their lives and the day to day operations. Staff enlist young people's views about all aspects of the care being offered, and listen to young people's opinions, suggestions and complaints, taking them fully into account when amending any aspect of the homes provision. By being actively listened to, a sense of worth and ownership is engendered in young people. Care planning and practice is personalised and fully meets the specialist needs of each young person.

Staff work in a consistent and coordinated way with young people, their families and people from other agencies involved with the delivery of care. This ensures that young people continue to get the right help, guidance and advice they need to achieve positive outcomes.

Staff at the home are diverse, committed, competent and well-trained. Staff have the right mix of skills and experience and a detailed knowledge of the young people they care for. They are professional and well able to provide the support and guidance required.

Areas for improvement

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people are making excellent progress to present a positive view of themselves. With the assistance of staff they are able to develop their emotional resilience, by understanding and addressing the reasons for their placement. By developing strong and trusting relationships, staff nurture young people to help them feel valued and make informed choices about the future direction of their life.

With the help of specialist therapeutic interventions young people are enabled to develop a greater understanding of the difficulties they have faced in their lives and start to address their feelings and frustrations. Young people confirm that staff know them very well. Through several weekly discussion workshop sessions young people are provided with a safe venue for exploring their feelings and coping strategies. Young people are empowered to cope with uncertainty, disappointments, and new challenges in a constructive, socially acceptable way, providing them with a very positive outcome.

Young people enjoy healthy lifestyles and are helped to take an active interest and responsibility in looking after their own physical and emotional health, subject to their age and understanding. Through guidance and sound advice, young people choose to eat a healthy and well-balanced diet and engage in activities that promote physical exercise. For example: they take regular trips out to walk in the countryside and at the coast; they play football competitively against other homes, and have a regular kick around in the garden. Through the many workshop topics available young people are able to make well-informed choices about their health as they receive detailed information on a wide-range of health and social issues, including sexual health, relationships, and the dangers of smoking and alcohol and substance misuse.

Young people are making very good progress with their education. They go to the providers own registered school and attendance is excellent. Young people say that they enjoy school and the variety of topics being provided both in and out of class. Records and reports confirm that some exceptional work is produced when considering progress from their starting point at the time of placement. Young people understand the importance of learning and are being practically assisted to make informed choices about how to develop their skills and abilities through education. Young people are keen to go to school in the morning!

Young people benefit from directed and appropriate contact with their families where this is permitted by placing authorities. This support enables them to retain and normalise positive relationships with the important people in their lives. Staff are careful to ensure that young people recognise contact as a controlled, safe and enjoyable experience. Some young people may find seeing their family stressful and in such circumstances staff always make sure young people are suitably and sensitively supported.

Some older young people are being helped to prepare to become more independent in readiness for their eventual transition into adult life. This support is appropriate to

their age and level of understanding and is being evidenced by an illustrated Independence Skills programme file. Young people are routinely involved in the running of the house including shopping, cooking, tidying and managing their own money, and encouraged to take appropriate levels of responsibility for themselves. A young person said, 'I helped with making the cakes for a charity event which raised a lot of money. I'm not a bad cook'. Other young people confirmed that they enjoy cooking and will regularly help in the kitchen when they can. Placing authority pathway plans have not been prepared in two cases despite being statutory review requirements.

Young people's bedrooms are very tidy, demonstrating that they can look after their belongings and show a sense of pride in their personal space. One young person proudly showed off his pet goldfish and plants, the keeping of which confirmed his interests, commitment and improving levels of responsibility.

Quality of care

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

All young people living within this home are enabled to thrive within its stable, nurturing and supportive environment. Unanimously, young people confirm that they enjoy living in the home and feel well supported by the staff team looking after them. Staff are resourceful in finding ways to support young people to make progress in all aspects of their lives.

By working effectively as a team, staff have consistently high aspirations for young people, reinforcing stability and the potential for individual and group achievement. Staff enable young people address their past issues and develop the self confidence to address difficulties they may face in the future. This helps young people to start living happy and fulfilling lives and reinforce their emotional resilience. Staff centre their practice on the personal security and well-being of individual young people and by doing this, promote public safety. The therapeutic underpinnings of practice in the home effectively enable young people to view themselves in a positive, realistic light.

By utilising a structured programme of intervention, staff are adept at building positive relationships with young people. Young people know that they benefit by complying with explicit behavioural expectations and the homes planned timetable. This requires consistent involvement and a high level of supervision that in turn proactively encourages compliant socially acceptable behaviour. A nurturing structure enables significant bonding with staff and bonding to the home by young people. In this positive and calm environment any problems and disagreements can be readily and constructively addressed.

The planning for young people's care is proficient; clearly outlining the placement objectives and the individual expectations being placed on young people. Placement plans provide a comprehensive picture of individual needs identifying the support young people require and how it will be provided. Staff confidently and effectively put plans into practice ensuring specific needs are met. Care planning and staff

practice jointly respect young people as individuals including any differing needs, backgrounds, interests and views. Young people receive a service focused upon their personal needs, cultural background, and personal identity that includes gender, faith, disability and sexual orientation while promoting tolerance and understanding of difference. Staff demonstrate a comprehensive knowledge of the young people they work with. Through this knowledge, they are able to ensure that needs are consistently met and children's rights and responsibilities are promoted and understood.

The reviewing of placements takes place regularly to ensure that objectives are vigorously pursued and that changing needs are recorded and fully considered when considering safeguarding issues. Young people are totally involved in the review of their plans. They attend review meetings and contribute fully to the written submissions being presented by their link workers.

Young people are actively consulted to ensure that their views, wishes and feelings influence the running of the home. Young people confirm that this process is effective in influencing change both in the home and in the wider organisation. Staff regularly seek young people's views about all aspects of their care and the running of the home on a day to day basis and more formally through in house meetings led and recorded by young people. Topics include including choosing balanced menu's, spare time and collective activities, how the house and their individual rooms are decorated and what plans there are for the future of the home. Young people are actively encouraged to be aware of others who are less fortunate, to develop empathy and improve citizenship. They rise to this challenge by energetically fundraising for charities. Staff consistently take young people's views seriously and will help young people understand why it may not be possible to act upon their views where necessary.

Young people know how to complain and any concerns they may express are taken seriously and addressed, usually before they become a complaint. The manager and staff team are not complacent about the absence of concerns raised by young people and remain receptive to all issues, however petty, that are raised by the young people. All young people said that they know how to complain. Young people are fully aware that they can speak to social workers or advocacy services such as Childline. Young people confirm that their regular meetings and workshops provide them with ample opportunity to discuss any concern or emerging issue openly and without fear of criticism.

Young people live in a healthy environment that actively promotes their physical health and emotional well-being. They confirm that they are practically supported to develop healthy lifestyles. All staff and the homes housekeeper understand the importance of a well-balanced diet and ensure young people enjoy healthy and nutritious homemade meals. Young people confirm that the diet is wholesome and varied and responsive to special requests. Young people receive practical advice about the connection between a healthy diet and keeping fit. They have regular opportunity to assist in meal preparation and recreational cooking with help from staff and fully acknowledge the importance of sociable, communal meals.

Young people have regular access to community health services and are registered with a local doctor, dentist and optician. Staff demonstrate an excellent understanding of young people's health needs, ensuring that they are addressed. Staff assist young people to keep healthy by encouraging routine health checks including dentist and optician appointments. Young people receive suitable medical advice and treatment when they are feeling unwell and staff are able to safely administer first aid in an emergency. Safe and effective procedures ensure staff safely manage the arrangements for administering medication to young people.

Staff ensure that the homes daily routine actively supports young people's participation in education and promotes school attendance. Staff support young people's learning by a combination of classroom assistance, supporting educational projects and helping with homework. Young people have access to books, art materials and other educational resources within the home and at the provider's school site. Staff additionally support young people with school projects, school events, educational outings and performances. Attendance is very good and young people are keen to access education. The schools emphasis on qualification encourages young people to aspire to obtaining GCSEs wherever possible.

Staff support and encourage young people to focus their recreational interests and abilities where possible into practical vocational work, for example from taking riding lessons, to helping in a stable.

Young people live in a very comfortable, large, detached family house in a cosmopolitan residential area that blends well into the local neighbourhood. The house is exceptionally clean, well decorated and furnished to a very good standard. Young people are very well settled and have a strong sense of ownership. Young people confirm that they have helped to decide on the décor of communal areas and personalised their own rooms. There are no indications of damage and young peoples rooms are clean and tidy indicating a sense of pride in where they live.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people live in a supportive and structurally safe environment where they are effectively protected from harm and can feel safe and secure. All young people confirmed that they felt safe living at the home, were well supported by all of the staff and were not being bullied in any way whatsoever.

Staff give young people's safety the highest priority. Staff are very well trained in safeguarding, able to recognise the signs and symptoms of abuse and know what they need to do to ensure young people are effectively safeguarded. Young people receive excellent advice about personal safety, including any potential risk from their peers or adults. Staff encourage young people to let them know when they have worries or if they have any concerns. Staff work very effectively with therapists,

social workers and other agencies to ensure vulnerable young people are protected by sharing information and putting safeguarding plans into practice. Staff have access to a whistle blowing policy should they have concerns about safeguarding practice.

The vulnerability of young people is well recognised by this specialist placement. The risks young people may present or face in the community, including exploitation and discrimination are well recorded and managed. Clear, regularly reviewed risk assessments and management plans effectively protect young people from harm. Staff are able to realistically balance the need for protection with enabling young people to take those reasonable risks that are part of normal adolescent growth and development. In this way young people are able to enjoy similar social experiences to their peers by engaging in community activities such as sports days and charity fund raising.

The home manages unauthorised absence extremely well, having previously developed its practice. Robust procedures are in place should young people go absent from the home or from an off site excursion. The stability of the placement, through the use of effective supervision and engagement between staff and young people, has been very effective in preventing absence without permission.

Staff are conscious of the potential reasons why young people may go missing and have used this information to assist young people to manage their feelings and frustrations in an acceptable manner which prevents them from running off and putting themselves in risky or illegal situations. Incentive schemes based on rewarding positive behaviour reinforce this approach.

The behaviour of young people living at this home is normally very good. Young people are made aware on admission of the expectations of the placement and what standards of behaviour are expected. Young people sign agreements confirming the possible consequences of any poor behaviour. Young people regularly review individual behavioural plans with their link workers and discuss the ongoing collective expectations for the group in children's meetings. Staff apply consistent strategies to encourage and support young people to expand socially acceptable behaviour in all situations both in the home and general community. There are effective responses available to staff for the management of infrequent challenging behaviour by the use of an approved physical restraint methodology. The need to use these measures is rare but extremely well recorded, enabling staff and the homes management to review circumstances and effectiveness of practice. Young people are aware of the circumstances in which such measures may be used but recognise these are always in extreme circumstances and only used to ensure they are kept safe. Young people express no concerns about the rewards and sanctions used by the home.

Young people live in a physically safe environment. They are protected by an extensive range of health and safety procedures, risk assessments and preventive checks. Staff carry out regular health and safety checks, including fire drills, to ensure the premises are safe and young people know what to do in case of an emergency. The recruitment and selection of people working at the home follows

robust company procedures and checks and ensures young people are looked after by safe adults. The homes manager is vigilant in ensuring that all appointed staff possess the relevant skills, competencies and qualifications to meet the needs of looked after young people. Appropriately vigorous systems are in place to ensure that all visitors to the home are suitably checked and supervised while on the premises. In these ways young people are kept safe and effectively protected.

Leadership and management

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

Young people live in a home that is very efficiently managed and promotes their safety and best interests. The home comprehensively meets the aims of its Statement of Purpose; young people, families and social workers are very clear about the services and support the home provides when accessing this document. The young person's guide is readable and delivers useful information and pictures of what the home provides, in an age-appropriate, friendly tone.

The manager and staff team effectively demonstrate their strong commitment to delivering exceptional child care practice tailored to the individual and personal needs of each young people they look after. Young people make excellent progress across the many aspects of their lives, including school attendance and educational achievement, emotional development and maturity, and in keeping themselves safe.

The Registered Manager uses reflective practice effectively while consistently enlisting and acting upon feedback from young people, staff and social workers. In house detailed monitoring of the quality of care is used to inform and improve the service provided to ensure young people get the best possible positive outcomes. The homes ethos is one of sustained improvement based on its previous performance and the progress being made by young people.

The manager presents a clear and realistic understanding of the strengths of the service and areas for further development, based on strong evidence. The home prides itself on its successive outstanding judgements at inspection and strives to improve on all aspects of practice.

Young people are looked after by a very competent staff team who display a wide range of skills and experience. All established staff have a relevant qualification in working with young people. The skills and diversity within the team match the needs of young people living in the home very well. The manager and staff are committed to providing young people with stability, consistency and security needed to keep them safe. The staffing complement is sufficient to meet the needs of young people in the best possible way, including the provision of waking night staff. Staffing numbers provide for the levels of support needed to promote activities, visits and attending appointments. Staff receive a comprehensive training programme that addresses the particular behavioural specialism addressed by this placement alongside the more pastoral needs of young people. Training provides staff with the statutory input, skills, qualification and knowledge to effectively do their jobs.

Staff are very well-supported by the manager. They have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities, and the high expectations placed on them for providing superior childcare practice. Collectively, staff confirm that when they need support and guidance, the manager is always responsive. Staff regularly receive one-to-one supervision and annual appraisals of their practice which informs their learning and development. Team meetings take place monthly, encouraging the whole staff team to discuss the general operation of the home, how the service may be improved and to reflect on young people's progress.

The home's written records are securely stored and provide a comprehensive but practical picture of individual young people's needs, development and progress. Young people's records contain up-to-date information about them, including the relevant documents from placing authorities. The manager is proactive in following up shortfalls from placing authorities.

Equality and diversity practice is **outstanding**.