

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Norma Welsby
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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 children's home provides domestic accommodation for a maximum of three young people. The house is located on the site of a secure estate but this home is not a secure home and offers open accommodation. The home is independently staffed and equipped and has its own gardens and summerhouse.

Young people are mainly placed following a period in the secure home on site and placements are arranged on a short-term transitional basis. The purpose of the home is to provide a more focused opportunity, a stepping stone from a secure environment, for young people to prepare for their next placement, in an open setting. The use of this house can also allow additional opportunities for increased levels of semi-independent living within a domestic setting.

The area is well served with local shops and community resources. The local town centre is approximately one and a half miles away and easily accessed by public transport. The home also has access to a car which young people use regularly.

Overall effectiveness

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

This is a good home, in which the staff team work together to achieve positive outcomes for young people. Overall relationships between staff and young people are good, sometimes outstanding. Young people acknowledge that staff work hard to keep them safe and prepare them for their next placement. The home provides effective care during an often difficult transitional time for young people.

Safeguarding practice is effective and robust. Multi-disciplinary working is strong feature of this service and enables young people to benefit from a variety of services that supports their health, safety and education.

Young people make good progress in their lives, taking into account their starting point at the time of placement. However there are often differences in what young people wish to do and what is agreed by multi-disciplinary professionals as safe and appropriate behaviour. Inevitably, at times, this affects young people's relationships with staff and also their engagement in this placement. This factor is well recognised by the service, families and placing authorities. Each young person has an individual plan and risk assessment which includes supporting young people to make appropriate choices, recognise risks, build self-respect and a more positive self view.

There are six areas for improvement. The two main areas are in relation to quality monitoring processes (Regulation 34) and providing consistently good quality food that meets diverse individual and cultural tastes. Other areas relate to improving the

homeliness of the environment, more fully embracing cultural needs, reviewing young people's forums and ensuring all aspects of the placement plan is quality checked.

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
13 (2001)	ensure food is properly prepared, wholesome and nutritious, and specifically that it is of a consistently good quality and that it meets individual and cultural tastes (Regulation 13)	06/11/2011
34 (2001)	ensure Regulation 34 quality monitoring processes fully address all matters identified in the regulation including a report of how the quality of care can be improved and evidence of its consultation processes. (regulation 34)	06/11/2011

Recommendations

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

- ensure young people's views, wishes and feelings are sought in the most appropriate way, for example, by ensuring that young people's forum's are an empowering experience (NMS 1.1)
- ensure all parts of the home provide a comfortable and homely environment, particularly that the bathroom be well maintained, clean and pleasant to use (NMS 10.3)
- ensure all aspects of individual identity are fully promoted, including fully embracing cultural needs (NMS 2.1)
- ensure each young person's placement plan is monitored, specifically that it does not contain contradictions and that it is signed and dated by a senior member of staff. (NMS 25.2)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

The home is very effective in providing personalised and well-planned care that meets the expectations of multi-disciplinary professionals. Young people make very good progress in respect of their starting point at the time of their placement, which

is usually following discharge from the service's secure setting. Young people develop a more positive self-view, emotional resilience and confidence in themselves as they mature into young adults. While individualised care is very much a strength of this service, not all aspects of cultural needs are fully embraced. For example, young people may not have opportunities, outside of their family contact, to mix with other people of the same ethnic background.

Staff actively promote and support young people's education and attainment. There are incentives in place to encourage young people to attend education and staff invest a lot of time in encouraging young people to engage fully in a educational opportunities. Staff value education and provide lots of support and encouragement. Young people benefit from staff having high expectations about what they can achieve if they work hard.

Mealtimes are planned and sociable occasions. Young people say that while they enjoy much of the food provided, it is not of a consistently good quality, nor does it fully reflect cultural tastes and preferences. This view is supported by the inspection findings, which also identified that not all staff feel equally competent to cook nutritious and varied meals. Young people regularly influence changes to the menu plan. Staff recognise the social importance of mealtimes and young people are also provided with opportunities to eat out.

There is an excellent approach to promoting the physical and emotional well-being of young people. Individual files are well organised and include identification of health needs, including emotional and mental health needs and how these will be met. This enables young people to receive specialist care, in accordance with their individual needs, and which improves their outcomes. Young people can also access the on-site nurse who provides an excellent resource. Her rapport with young people is outstanding and young people really do value her care and support.

Young people benefit from staff having a good understanding of the benefits of them sustaining contact with family and friends. The arrangements for contact are clearly recorded. Young people confirm they are encouraged to maintain positive contact with their family.

When appropriate, young people are encouraged to learn skills that will prepare them for adulthood. Young people are supported to increase their independence, responsibilities and decision making in their day-to-day lives. For example, they have regular opportunities to develop confidence in domestic skills, budgeting, shopping, preparing meals, accessing local services and using public transport. Some issues exist in respect of motivation, but staff work hard to encourage young people. Young people are supported towards returning to family, a longer-term or a semi-independent placement.

Quality of care

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

The quality of young people's care is satisfactory. While staff are very committed to supporting young people, there is a sense of frustration that young people do not always fully engage. This is partly due to young people not wanting to live at this home and wanting to live closer to their own homes. Young people know the reasons why this is not felt to be possible at the present time. Supporting young people with such complex needs and vulnerabilities means that strict boundaries have to be put in place. This sometimes affects relationships that exist between staff and young people and the overall quality of care.

Placement plans are comprehensive and are mostly written clearly. However, some information has not been quality checked as a contradiction was noted in one area and this plan had not been signed off by a senior member of staff, which is the usual practice in this service. Staff work extremely closely with placing authorities and other agencies to ensure that individual needs and risks are thoroughly addressed. Consultation with a sample of placing authorities confirmed that they are very satisfied with the care and support young people receive at this service. They recognise that staff are challenged by the young people they are caring for. One social worker stated that she felt her client was doing very well considering her position before being secured and that the staff were very good at keeping her safe and consistently applying strict boundaries so that she could learn to live a safe and structured lifestyle.

Young people enjoy some positive and constructive relationships with staff, but these are not consistently good. They have a key worker and regular key working sessions take place. Young people are taught to be considerate and respectful towards their peers, family and professionals involved in their lives.

Young people are extensively consulted. Consequently, they are able to influence decision. For example, recently they were consulted about the home's refurbishment programme and have made several choices for communal areas and their own bedrooms. However, seeking young people's views does not always happen in the most appropriate way. For example, young people's forums are held very regularly and whilst young people are given every opportunity to have their say, the composition and running of the meeting does not empower young people as it is too staff-focused. Young people know how to make a complaint and feel confident that staff will listen to them.

Suitable procedures are in place to manage and administer medication. Staff have had training and all staff have ongoing first aid training. Minimal medication is in use.

The home is within easy reach of the local town and an extensive network of transport links. Young people regularly use these facilities as well as more extensive resources further afield. The internal environment is light, spacious and contemporary. The design and facilities of the home generally meet young people's needs; however on the day of the site visit, the bathroom presented as grubby, untidy and uninviting and the bath panel was damaged. Each young person has a good sized and well equipped single bedroom, which they are able to personalise. Externally, young people have access to a large garden and summer house.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people feel safe and protected at the home. Sometimes they feel there are too many boundaries in place, but they are aware that these are part of multi-disciplinary decisions and are meant to keep them safe from harm. There are excellent systems in place for responding to any concerns about the safety and well-being of the young people. The staff team receive regular training in child protection and know how to proceed if they are concerned about young people's welfare.

The home has appropriate systems in place to protect young people should they go missing, including individual protocols. Their liaison with the local missing from home police liaison officer is excellent. Staff are very open with young people about the procedures they need to follow if they go missing and young people benefit from having this awareness. Consequently, the number of incidents of young people going missing is significantly low. Commendable efforts are made by staff to discourage young people from going missing and maintaining contact with them while they are absent.

Young people know how they are expected to behave. Staff provide consistent boundaries, reinforce good behaviour and provide incentive schemes. Risk assessments are robust. Where risks are not manageable, appropriate consultation takes place to review what needs to be done in the best interests of the young person. During consultation, social workers and the local missing from home police liaison officer have praised the staff's commitment in endeavouring to keep young people safe but also in being open and honest when risks have become unmanageable and they feel they could not keep young people safe from harm.

Comprehensive staff recruitment procedures, including clearance checks, are followed with all checks having to be in place before a new member of staff starts working with young people. Since the last inspection there have been no new external appointments, only internal transfers. Visitors to the home are also vetted. These practices support the view that young people are protected from people who may pose a risk to them.

The home's health and safety measures provide a safe environment for young people to live comfortably. Generally the building is well maintained and the relevant safety checks to gas, electric and fire equipment are carried out at the required intervals.

Leadership and management

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

The home has a detailed Statement of Purpose and children's guide. Information is regularly reviewed and updated.

The home is well resourced and employs a sufficient number of staff to maintain good cover. The management of the open house is the responsibility of the Registered Manager, who also manages the on-site secure service. The house has a dedicated staff team, including a team leader. As well as a permanent staff team, the home also has access to additional support from staff working in other part of the service but whom are known to young people. All staff have previously worked in the secure units. Staff benefit from regular staff meetings, supervision and appraisal, which means their training needs are regularly reviewed and addressed. All of the day staff have achieved a National Vocational Qualification at level 3 or above. Night staff are working towards these qualifications. Other ongoing training is provided to a very good level; recent training having included child protection, expert witness, medication, and diversity, equality and inclusion.

The service continues to demonstrate capacity for further improvement. The service is regularly monitored and shortfalls are identified and action taken. However Regulation 34 quality monitoring processes are not robust enough. For example, they do not fully address all matters identified in the regulation including a report of how the quality of care can be improved and evidence of its consultation processes.

The home has a history of good compliance. One requirement and four recommendations made at the last inspection in February 2011 have mostly been addressed. These related to ensuring robust notification and fire records, and staff training in equality and diversity, all of which have been fully met. Recommendations made in respect of improving food provision and providing a pleasant, domestic environment require further attention to detail and are the subject of a requirement and recommendation of this inspection report.

Information relating to significant events affecting young people's safety is notified to relevant agencies, including Ofsted and placing authorities. This ensures that issues relating to young people's safety is appropriately shared and effectively managed.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.