

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Maria McGranaghan
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home cares for up to 25 children and young people from birth to aged 17 years. The home is divided into two houses close by one another. One house specialises in caring for children with learning disabilities. The other house cares for young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties, and there is a mother and baby unit within this house. The service is owned by a charitable organisation.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: a service of exceptional quality that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

Good: a service of high quality that exceeds minimum requirements

Adequate: a service that only meets minimum requirements

Inadequate: a service that does not meet minimum requirements

Overall effectiveness

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

Young people live in an extremely caring and supportive environment that enables them to make exceptional progress. Achievements in education, behaviour management and social integration are consistently met to a high standard and in turn provide excellent outcomes for young people.

Young people benefit from very well-planned and personalised care. Clear placement plans include information that ensures young people are cared for consistently and in line with their individual needs. Staff work collaboratively with external services and this ensures young people get the right help, guidance and support they need to develop to their full potential.

Young people's safety is prioritised in the home. Staff work diligently with external services to ensure the potential for significant harm is minimised at all times. Consequently, young people are positive about the care they receive and the strong and nurturing relationships they have formed with staff. Young people thrive in the home.

Young people are cared for by a committed, knowledgeable and consistent staff team. Suitable staff ratios ensure that young people are afforded the care and attention they need in order to build essential self-confidence and self-esteem. One young person said 'It is great here, I feel loved and cared for.'

Young people benefit from a dedicated team of staff who are both suitably experienced and trained to work in the home. Staff receive consistent supervision and this ensures the high standards of care provided in the home continue to meet the needs of young people.

The home is effectively managed with a strong emphasis on providing unique care packages for young people. Young people are central to the care planning process and are regularly consulted in the development and review of their care. Likewise, excellent monitoring systems are in place to ensure that all aspects of the home is closely scrutinised and the appropriate action taken to maintain and enhance performance within the home.

The children's home is situated in an affluent area close to local amenities and travel links. It is an exceptional building with plenty of indoor and outdoor space for young people to play. However, the flooring of a utility room in the sister property is worn and loose in some areas posing a potential hazard. It is noted that this utility room is not currently used by young people. As a result, one recommendation is made at this inspection.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure avoidable hazards are removed as is consistent with a domestic setting (NMS 10.3)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **outstanding**.

Young people make excellent progress in the home. From their initial starting point, young people develop in areas such as self-esteem and confidence and this helps them to take on the challenges in their lives. As a result, significant achievements are seen in the areas of education, behaviour management and social integration.

Young people thrive in a home where relationships between staff and young people are very well-established. As a direct result, young people make excellent progress in understanding their situation and take positive steps forward from adverse past experiences. Young people say, 'The staff listen to me, will come and play with me and I can talk to them about anything. I feel safe and happy here. It feels like my home.'

Young people make outstanding progress within their individual educational settings. School reports highlight progress across the curriculum with young people demonstrating a commitment to their education, gaining 100% attendance and

significantly improved grades. Furthermore, some young people with a previous history of non-attendance at school have achieved up to nine A-C GCSE qualifications. Likewise, young people feel good about their achievements. One young person said, 'I never thought I would achieve this much, the staff have really helped me. I feel like I can plan for my future.' Young people's enthusiasm about their education demonstrates the home's diligence in enabling them to realise their own potential and personal aspirations.

Young people are healthier as a direct result of living in the home. They are registered with local health care professionals and are provided with suitable support in order to attend appointments. Likewise, young people are aware of the importance of healthy lifestyles and engage extremely well in both in-house group discussions and input from external services. Consequently, behaviours such as smoking and drinking alcohol have significantly reduced.

Young people are provided with a range of internal and external activities to support healthy and active lifestyles. Activities include, horse riding, cadets, trampolining and cycling. Recently, young people worked together to raise money for charity by undertaking a cycling marathon. This was a fabulous achievement. A young person said, 'It was really hard work but we completed it and that made us feel great.' Likewise, young people make friends at school and in the community enabling them to develop their own style, interests and personality.

Young people are supported to maintain relationships with important family members and friends in accordance with the local authority care plan. A parent said, 'I am so happy with my child's placement. My child is very happy and is achieving so much. I know this was the right place for her. The staff include me in everything and this helps to keep our relationship strong.' As a result, young people are supported to maintain a sense of identity and belonging.

Young people working towards a plan of independent living are provided with excellent support in order to develop skills essential to moving on. As a result of careful planning, young people make consistent progress and strive to further enhance their skills. For example, young people take turns to plan and cook the evening meal while others undertake additional training courses such as nutrition, safeguarding, first aid and fire awareness. The level of support provided to young people generates valuable opportunities to develop and enhance independent skills at an achievable level.

Young people's views and opinions are encouraged and respected in the home. Young people say, 'We talk with staff all the time. We can talk about anything. It is good because they are interested in what we have to say.' It is clear that mutual respect for one another is a priority in the home. This practice enables young people to feel safe in order to discuss matters openly with staff or as a group.

Quality of care

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

Young people make exceptionally good progress in a home that provides a stable, supportive and nurturing environment. Staff are enthusiastic about young people's progress and this is evident in the aspirations they hold for them. Young people and their families speak highly of the service provided in the home.

Young people's placement plans are excellent. Each plan perfectly encapsulates a picture of individual need and the steps to be taken to address them. Likewise, external agencies work closely with the home to ensure that young people are afforded professional support in order to maximise their overall potential. The manager said 'We are all very clear what help and support young people need and understand how important it is they get the right help, I know all the staff are completely dedicated to the young people.' Similarly, plans clearly identify individual heritage and identity. Young people are encouraged to pursue their individual beliefs and are offered a range of material to develop their understanding of individual choice and difference.

Young people are encouraged to demonstrate socially acceptable behaviour. Individual behaviour management plans are developed with young people and are supported by comprehensive risk assessments, one to one sessions and input from a range of external services. This process enables young people and staff to identify triggers for negative behaviour and effective strategies for positive behaviour management. Methods, such as the incentive programme, enable young people to recognise positive and helpful attitudes and this has proved to be successful.

Staff promote aspirations for the young people. They are fully committed to ensuring that each young person has the best opportunities and can achieve their full potential. For example, young people undertaking GCSE examinations are provided with private home tuition in order to enhance their knowledge and skills. Likewise, young people who find engaging in activities difficult are provided with taster sessions in order to have first-hand experiences and make informed choices. Consequently, all young people are engaged in activities of their choice. As a result of well-planned care, young people develop essential confidence and self-esteem that assists to maximise their potential.

Young people know how to complain. Information is provided in the young people's guide and organisational complaints documents. Procedures for managing complaints ensure they are handled fairly and investigated thoroughly by the manager or external nominated person. Likewise, young people benefit from regular consultation sessions that enable them to explore their care both inside and outside of the home. This process enables young people to discuss matters of concern and work with staff in gaining a suitable resolution. For example, young people work together on matters such as bickering in the home. This enables young people to recognise how this might impact on others and what can be done to make things better. Consequently, the positive relationship between staff and young people ensures that young people feel empowered and valued in order to raise matters of concern in the home.

Young people live in a spacious and exceptionally well-maintained and decorated home that blends into the residential area. Young people are central to making the house into their home and proudly display photographs, drawings and comments around the home. However, one utility area in the sister property which is not currently accessed by young people required updating, specifically in relation to the vinyl flooring which is torn creating a potential hazard.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people's safety is prioritised within the home. Targeted individual risk assessments are developed with young people and partner agencies and serve to highlight specific risk factors for young people and the strategies in place in order to reduce them. Likewise, excellent partnership working with the local authority ensures safeguarding procedures are up-to-date and effective in maintaining young people's safety. As a result, there are no young people missing overnight and the frequency of young people being absent from the home is significantly reduced.

Young people are supported to recognise the key factors that influence their behaviours. For example, young people are central to the development and review of behaviour management plans and risk assessments. Plans capture individual triggers for negative behaviour and provide an excellent insight into how young people perceive their behaviour and what strategies they believe will assist them. This has proven extremely successful and has enabled young people to take control of their behaviour and accept responsibility for the choice they make. A young person said, 'When you start to write things down you can see that something needs to change. The staff are brilliant. They have helped me to be much calmer and to think things through.'

Staff receive appropriate training in order to manage physical intervention within the home. They are clear that physical intervention is only used to prevent a young person harming themselves or others. The home focuses on de-escalation and re-direction techniques in order to engage young people and work through periods of anger and frustration in a safe and calm manner. Staff say 'We only ever guide young people away from a situation and this is always recorded. We understand they can get angry and we are here to help them find ways to manage and channel their anger in more positive ways.' Consequently, young people's behaviour is suitably managed and the use of physical intervention in the home is minimal.

The home maintains up-to-date policies and procedures for the protection of young people living in the home. Staff are appropriately trained in order to respond quickly and efficiently to allegations or suspicion of abuse. Staff say, 'We receive regular training and we have agencies coming to the home to talk to staff and young people. We are very protective of the young people and ensure their safety at all times.' Likewise, staff acknowledge young people's vulnerabilities that may serve to hamper a young person's ability to make their feelings known but may serve to escalate their

behaviour. As a result, young people are closely monitored and changes in behaviour recorded. Effective communication with external agencies, involved in the care of young people, ensures a holistic approach to maintaining the safety and wellbeing of young people.

The home employs a robust recruitment procedure that ensures young people are looked after by staff that are appropriately checked in order to work in the home. Visitors are appropriately vetted and this helps to make sure that young people are protected while in their home.

Leadership and management

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

Young people live in a home that is managed in their best interests. The home meets the aims and objectives of the Statement of Purpose and young people, social workers and families are clear about the service and support the home provides.

Internal and external monitoring systems provide the home with a consistent approach to the overall monitoring of care. Detailed information highlights areas for development and the manager's action plan details the methods used to enhance the service. Staff receive a high level of support from the manager. Supervision takes place regularly and serves to identify training needs and personal development targets. An excellent annual training package ensures staff receive up-to-date quality training essential to maintaining the excellent child care practice evident in the home.

The manager makes good use of reflective practice, the views of external services and families are taken into account to ensure young people's needs are appropriately met. The home shows the capacity to improve based on the progress the young people have made to date.

The home employs a strong and committed staff team who have all undertaken the NVQ level three award. The training of staff at this level ensures that they are suitably qualified in the care and management of young people. Young people's records are appropriately stored and regularly updated in order to capture to essence of young people at a given time.

The manager and staff demonstrate a strong commitment to delivering excellent child centred practice tailored to the individual and personal needs of young people. The effectiveness of this approach is measurable in the outstanding progress young people make, particularly in education and social integration.

The manager is aware of the procedure for notifying Ofsted of relevant incidents and has been consistent in the reporting of all incidents occurring in the home. This practice ensures that information is shared with the regulatory agency in order that the actions and outcomes for young people can be suitable assessed.

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* and the evaluation schedule for the inspection of children's homes.