

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Caroline Wilson
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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 is a privately owned home. It is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to three young people aged from 11 to 17 years with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Overall effectiveness

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

Leaders and managers understand the strengths and weaknesses of the home and ensure that they keep updated with legislation and practice issues that promote the needs of young people. The main strengths of the home are the positive relationships between young people and staff. Young people and staff enjoy participating in activities together, so young people learn about social interaction as well as the benefits of healthy living. Young people make good progress in relation to their starting points across all aspects of their welfare and development, underpinned by effective support from staff to meet individual young people's needs. Staff in the home demonstrate a good understanding of safe working practice to meet individual young people's needs, and have a good focus to helping young people meet their individual aspirations.

Recommendations have been made with regards to ensuring information is known to all staff.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure that risk assessments are undertaken for staff working alone (NMS17)
- ensure that information is provided with the ratio of young people to staff (NMS 13)
- ensure that team meetings are regularly accessible for all staff (NMS19)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people enjoy good health in all respects. They have regular access to health professionals, who can address specific issues, such as alcohol and drug misuse. Young people have regular checkups in relation to their physical health. This helps support them to grow into healthy, mature, and well-balanced individuals.

Young people are open to and gain an appreciation and an understanding of cultures that differ from their own. Young people enjoy experimenting and enjoy the experience of tasting food from a range of cultures. They have choice in what they eat, and menus reflect children's cultures, needs and individual wishes.

Young people who are of school age attend well and make good progress. Young people receive good support which ensures their regular attendance at school to enable them to reach their maximum educational potential. Young people who are not of school age pursue other work-based activities that provide them with practical skills with regards to their chosen vocation.

Young people participate in a full range of opportunities, and enjoy and achieve to their maximum potential. Activities available meet the diverse needs and individual choices of young people. The activities provide young people with a personal sense of achievement, as well as promoting their physical and emotional health, and development of their social skills.

Young people participate in activities that promote their independence skills, such as being involved in the cooking and preparation of food. This provides young people with valuable opportunities to learn important life skills and helps them to develop personal responsibility and independence.

Young people benefit from regular contact with friends, which helps them to sustain, reinforce and create links with their birth family and wider support networks. Contact arrangements are clear, known to staff and are undertaken in accordance with plans set out by placing authorities.

Quality of care

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

Staff ensure that young people attend school regularly and punctually. Staff have a good understanding of the particular difficulties faced by young people who are in care and work diligently to help them overcome these. Staff ensure that any matters identified in their personal education plans are fulfilled in order to support them to meet their maximum potential.

Arrangements are in place to ensure that the views and wishes of young people are taken into account in relation to decisions about the daily life of the home. Regular residents' meetings are held where young people contribute to day-to-day decisions such as menu and activities planning. Young people are also supported by staff to contribute to their overall care plans during statutory review meetings in respect of the wider plans for their care.

Positive behavioural strategies are in place to support young people to develop skills in managing conflict and to develop positive relationships. Sanctions given are fair and are appropriate to the rule that has been broken. Young people are also provided with opportunities to earn rewards. Young people are rewarded by being provided with additional activities that they enjoy. This not only celebrates young people's achievements, but also gives them an awareness that rewards are not always monetary based.

Young people enjoy positive relationships with each other. Care has been taken to ensure that young people are placed with others of similar needs so that they can develop good relationships with each other. Staff enjoy positive relationships with young people, based on a mutual respect which is central and integral to every aspect of care that they give.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people are safe and feel safe living at the home. Staff ensure that young people are protected from harm. There is a culture of openness and trust. Staff are aware of and alert to any signs that might indicate that a young person is at risk of harm. Staff have recently been trained in safeguarding and know what constitutes safe care practice.

The home provides a good level of physical safety for young people and ensures that the premises are regularly checked in order to eliminate hazards. Health and safety inspections by external agencies are also undertaken within required timescales to ensure that all equipment is in good working order. This ensures that as far as reasonably practicable, the home is free from avoidable risks. Staff ensure that young people are aware of the importance of fire safety procedures and the consequences of failing to respond in a timely manner for both themselves and others.

Young people are protected from bullying by the vigilance of staff. Staff are aware of the indicators of bullying and what procedures to follow in the event that an incident occurs.

Young people rarely go missing from the home. Young people who are absent without authority are protected in accordance with the Runaway and Missing From Home or Care protocol. Risk assessments are in place to identify the likelihood of young people going missing. Remedial steps are undertaken to ensure these risks are minimised. This includes keeping in constant contact with young people and those who are close to them. Staff are able to assess whether a young person is at risk of harm or has broken their curfew and determine the next appropriate course of action.

Leadership and management

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

Dates of team meetings are not always held on days that are inclusive to all staff. Team meetings are used as a forum to discuss responses to working with young people or housekeeping issues. Staff have a personal responsibility of ensuring that they have read the team meeting minutes of these meetings if they are unable to attend. This ensures that they are kept up-to-date with any relevant changes. A lone working policy is in place, however, this is not known to all staff. In particular, staff are not aware what the management responsibility is with regards to their duty of care for staff working alone. Management are available to support staff out of hours should the need arise. The Statement of Purpose does not clearly set out the ratio of staff to young people. This lack of information does not provide sufficient detail for an assessment to be made by those who are interested in placing a young person, as to whether the home can provide a good level of supervision. Additional staffing is and can be put in place, if identified as being required in a young person's care plan. Presently, there is a sufficient number of staff on shift at any one time to protect young people's safety.

The leadership and management arrangements within this organisation are good. Management have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the home. Young people speak well of staff and the care that they are being given. Management have a good understanding of young people's needs and provide services and support for them in order that their needs are well met. The home effectively demonstrates their capacity for continued improvement. They have made improvements in the service that they offer to young people, for instance, the statutory requirements at the last inspection have been met.

Regular monitoring of the home is undertaken to ensure that the home is operating in accordance with its Statement of Purpose. This includes Regulation 33 visits by an independent visitor as well as Regulation 34 monitoring by management at the home. This monitoring is effective in ensuring that the home continues to provide a good service for young people. Staff are also provided with up-to-date information in relation to changes in childcare guidance and practice from the independent visitor.

A sufficient number of staff work in the home; they are appropriately trained and supervised. Supervision is held in accordance with national minimum standards and supports staff in promoting the welfare of young people as well as their own personal development needs.

Staff receive regular training. They recently attended courses on physical intervention and safeguarding. This enables them to undertake restraints safely, should the need arise, as well as respond appropriately to any matters of child protection. At least one member of staff on shift at any one time is trained in administering first aid. The training programme is set out in advance to ensure that staff have the necessary skills to safeguard and promote the welfare of young people. Staff state that training provided is of good quality and enables them to fulfil their role to a good standard.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.