

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Anthony Kyem
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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 provides care and accommodation for up-to-five young people of either sex from 11 to 17 years of age. The home is registered with Ofsted to provide services to young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties. Young people receive care on a medium to long term basis. The home's primary purpose is to support young people to return home, wherever possible.

Overall effectiveness

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

From their starting points young people make positive progress by living here. Their care plans are individualised and these reflect young people's needs as individuals. Plans routinely include young people's views about their care and they contain sufficient information to enable staff, to promote successful outcomes for them. Recording of detail could be improved, to provide staff with more detailed information. However, this has not had a negative impact on young people's care.

Young people live in a safe environment and there are good arrangements made for young people's health, welfare and safety. Young people are kept safe and they are positive about their individual experiences. Relationships between young people and staff are a strong and impressive feature. For example, a young person previously resident at the home states: 'Thank you so much for being there for me in bad times. Thank you for looking after me so well and giving me valuable lessons in life. Thank you for advice needed and wanted. Thank you for so many good memories. Thank you for your understanding and allowing me to become a vegetarian and supporting my choice.'

Staff provide young people with continuity of care and this enables young people to form and develop trusting relationships, with staff. Whilst young people have a guide to the home, it does not contain the contact details of the independent reviewing officer, or the Children's Rights Director, for young people to refer to in times of need.

The home has a very committed management team, who actively oversee and monitor the quality of young people's care. This ensures that the home operates smoothly, in accordance with its Statement of Purpose. The staff team are very experienced and all are appropriately qualified. The manager is aware of the services strengths; however, in the absence of a written development plan, the home is unable to identify potential weaknesses or areas for potential improvement.

Young people are positive about the care and support provided to them. Comments

include: 'Staff are actually really nice. It's an easy life because it's better than being at home or on the streets. I'm happy with the home, they give young people good advice and they provide us with what we need...Since I came to live here my behaviours improved.'

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 placement plans are sufficiently detailed and promote all aspects of young people's needs (NMS 25.1)
- ensure the home has a written development plan, which is reviewed annually to identify planned changes or resources needed to ensure the smooth operations of the home (NMS 15.2)
- ensure the children's guide contains information to enable young people to contact their independent reviewing officer and the Children's Rights Director (NMS 13.5).

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people make good progress because of the positive support provided to them. The home works in partnership with young people's schools, social workers and educational support services to ensure that young people benefit from and have access to, positive educational opportunities. Most do well in education and from a starting point, educational attendance, achievement and engagement with education is good. Staff actively support young people with their education and this helps young people to become capable learners.

Young people are well treated as individuals and they receive good levels of individual support, to meet their needs. There is a positive approach towards promoting young people's good health, which encourages young people to lead a healthy lifestyle, for example, young people learn to eat healthily and exercise is actively promoted. Young people who require additional support, such as therapy, receive the help and support they need..

All young people have access to dentists, doctors and opticians to promote healthy outcomes for them. Staff provide young people with advice and support on health related issues and this enables young people to develop their knowledge and awareness of health issues and to take responsibility for their own health..

Young people are provided with activities of individual interest to them, including trips out and holidays. Young people enjoy these activities and they clearly benefit from them. Such opportunities enable young people to develop their social skills and make friendships.

Staff provide young people with structure, routine, encouragement and unconditional support, and this promotes their well-being. Young people benefit from the individualised support provided to them and they learn to cope with past experiences. With good support, young people learn to develop their emotional resilience. The services the home provides, promotes continuity in young people's lives and this enables them to form trusting relationships and positive attachments with staff.

All young people have a designated link worker to act as their principal supporter. Staff ensure that young people have access to professional support and this enables young people's needs to be met comprehensively. Young people are well supported with contact, which is actively encouraged to help young people maintain their relationships with their families and friends.

Quality of care

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

The accommodation provided for young people is homely in design, nicely decorated and furnished. Young people are provided with their own bedrooms, which they are free to personalise. The location of the home enables young people to have excellent access to public transport, local parks, sports facilities and a large shopping centre. All are within easy walking distance of the home.

Young people have access to confidential advice and support on relevant health issues, including advice and support with their emotional, sexual and physical health. Young people therefore know that they can turn to staff for support, in times of need. Staff, promote young people's good health by ensuring they have appropriate access to routine health services, such as, doctors, dentists and opticians. Young people also have access to therapy and mental health services, where needed. Such support enables young people to be healthy both physically and emotionally.

Young people say that they know how to make a complaint although rarely feel the need to. Young people have access to the children rights service, however, the contact details of their independent reviewing officer and the Children's Rights Director are not currently included within the children's guide to promote young people's rights to representation and independent advice. This restricts the types of services young people can access in times of need.

Young people say staff listen to their views and opinions. Frequent opportunities such as group meetings and one-to-one meetings enable young people to contribute to the running of the home. In addition young people contribute to monitoring visits and benefit from a monthly newsletter about matters affecting them. Overall this involves young people actively in day-to-day decisions...

From their starting points, young people make positive progress with their education and are actively supported by staff to attend school. Those who require additional support, get the support they need to avoid possible exclusion. The home works closely with young people's schools and educational support staff, which enables young people to achieve and in some cases make excellent progress. Young people take part in a range of enjoyable activities and they are able to pursue activities and hobbies of individual interest to them.

Young people care plans, whilst individualised, are not comprehensively detailed in all cases to reflect their needs, as individuals, in all outcome areas. Young people's views are included within their plans and they are able to make a positive contribution in their reviews. The relationships between young people and staff are exceptionally positive and these are built on trust and mutual respect. An independent reviewing officer says: 'always found them (staff) to be very professional in meetings. When they attend a review you can tell they know the young people and they go the extra mile.'

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people say they feel safe and that staff support them to keep safe. Staff are appropriately trained in child protection and this enables them to manage young people's risk taking behaviours safely. Staff know how to recognise and respond to any suspected abuse, as such any safeguarding concerns are promptly responded to.

Staff respond to young people's behaviours in a non punitive way, with the use of restraints and sanctions kept to an absolute minimum. Rewards systems, encouragement and praise are all used very effectively with positive behaviours actively rewarded. Where young people do make mistakes, staff work closely with them to help them make sense of their errors and judgements.

Any issues with bullying are managed effectively, in line with the home's policies and procedures. The home has a zero tolerance towards bullying and young people are educated about bullying so that they understand why bullying is wrong. Young people who go missing are protected and staff follow agreed protocols and procedures to promote their safe return. Young people are always greeted upon their return and made to feel welcome. This shows young people they are cared for.

Young people benefit from an experienced and stable staff team. Appropriate recruitment procedures ensure only suitable adults work in the home. The home provides young people with a safe environment. Individual risk assessments and behaviour management strategies inform staff how to work safely. Regular servicing of fire safety systems, gas and electrical appliances maintains a safe environment. Regular fire drills enables young people to understand the home's emergency fire evacuation procedures.

Leadership and management

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

The home's performance is monitored on a monthly basis by local councillors who provide the home with formal feedback in relation to its conduct and performance. The last councillor's visit identified no recommendations and reports: 'A first class establishment.'

A previous visit also identified positive practice. The reports states: 'Staff are very cheerful and dedicated. They run a successful home. It is always a pleasure talking to the staff and the children feel the same. It is a home to them, as it should be.'

In addition to the above, the home is also inspected by an independent reviewing officer, twice a year. The author of the last reports states, 'The staff team continue to be hard working and committed to maintaining high standards.' The visits are conducted professionally and this ensures that young people receive a good standard of quality care. Recommendations identified are always promptly acted upon to improve the home's performance.

The leadership and management of the home is strong. The registered manager is suitably experienced and qualified and the home demonstrates a positive commitment towards training and staff development. All staff, for example, are qualified and hold a national vocational qualification. Staff also undertake additional training to enhance their knowledge and skills and this enables them to meet the diverse needs of the young people they care for.

Staff supervision is consistently undertaken to ensure that they receive appropriate support. The management structure of the home is strengthened by two deputy team leaders. There are clear lines of accountability and sufficient arrangements exist, for other managers to deputise in the registered manager's absence.

The registered manager routinely monitors the quality of care. This enables staff to understand the home's strengths and weaknesses. Action can, therefore, be taken to rectify identified shortfalls and improve staff performance, where necessary. Sufficient numbers of staff are employed to meet the needs and numbers of the young people.

The home meets the aims and objectives of its Statement of Purpose, but does not have a written development plan to highlight areas for potential improvement. Therefore any progress in quality is not explicit or easily measurable. Some work is already being undertaken to review the home's performance in view of the revised national minimum standards.

All significant events are reported to the appropriate authorities in accordance with the home's statutory responsibilities.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.