

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Anthony Kyem
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This Local Authority children's home provides care and accommodation for up to six 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.

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 **good**.

Young people benefit from highly personalised, well planned care that promotes their needs very effectively. The progress young people make and the outcomes they achieve are very positive. Young people respond positively to the care and support provided to them by well trained, caring, committed and dedicated staff. Young people enjoy living at the home, where they are kept safe and have a strong sense of personal safety.

Young people's views and opinions are regularly sought, to promote their participation in the running of the home. As a result, they are able to have a positive influence about particular aspects of their care. Young people benefit from positive relationships with staff and they sustain their positive attachments.

The performance of the home is regularly monitored to promote the quality of young people's care. The manager has a positive understanding of the home's strengths and they take action to secure improvement, to promote the efficient operation of the home. Feedback received about the service is consistently positive.

Young people's social workers reported: 'In general, I am pleased with the quality of the young people's care and feel that their outcomes have improved as a result of their time there;' 'I feel that the quality of care for my young person is very good... For me, the thing that stands out about the service are the regular updates about a young person and the support provided by staff;' and 'The home has provided a high level of support for young people in their care.'

As a result of this inspection, there are three recommendations made for the registered person to address. These relate to updating the Statement of Purpose, ensuring significant events are reported to Ofsted within the recommended timescales and ensuring fire evacuations tests are undertaken promptly.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure the Statement of Purpose is updated to include details of all staff, who work at the home (NMS 13.3)
- ensure there is an emergency escape plan that all staff and young people are familiar with. This relates specifically, to monitoring and where necessary improving the actual time taken to evacuate the premises safely (NMS 10.9)
- ensure there is a system in place to notify within 24 hours the persons and appropriate authorities of the occurrence of significant events. (NMS 24.1)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people receive good support to promote a positive self-view. They are actively encouraged to value their positive attributes. Young people develop their emotional resilience, so they are better prepared to withstand stress and overcome their particular difficulties. Young people learn to make sense of their past experiences and they receive good support to move forward and plan for the future.

Young people make a positive contribution to the home and the wider community. They are engaged in positive activities and they develop their social skills, friendships and social networks as a result of their participation. Young people benefit from contact with their friends and families. They receive emotional and practical support, to sustain their positive attachments. Staff work well with young people's families to support and promote regular and constructive contact. A social worker reported, 'X was reluctant to have contact with her mum but the team have supported this and now regular contact takes place.'

Young people benefit from the help and support they need to maximise their independence. They learn to develop practical skills in shopping, washing, cooking, ironing and cleaning. Young people complete skills for life training to promote their effective preparation for adulthood. Eligible care leavers benefit from pathway plans to ensure their independence is well planned and supported.

Quality of care

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

Young people's views about their care and their relationships with staff are consistently positive. Young people receive continuity of care which enables them to sustain their positive attachments. Young people enjoy constructive relationships with staff and with each other. They benefit from high quality care that promotes their needs very effectively.

Young people are able to influence the running of the home. Their views, feelings and opinions are regularly sought, which ensures young people are listened to. Young people know how to make a complaint and their rights are promoted effectively.

Young people make excellent progress, in relation to their individual starting points. They benefit from well planned, highly individualised care that promotes their needs comprehensively. The progress young people make and the outcomes they achieve are exceptionally positive. Young people's needs in relation to age, gender, ethnicity and personal identity are all addressed positively, both within care planning and daily living. Young people's diverse needs are promoted and met comprehensively.

Young people benefit from receiving the services they need to promote their positive physical, emotional and psychological health. Young people develop a positive awareness of key health issues, to enable them to take responsibility for their own health and well-being. Young people recognise the importance of leading a healthy lifestyle. They benefit from receiving excellent support with relevant health issues, such as healthy eating, diet, sexual health and physical exercise. Young people are engaged successfully in positive activities that contribute to their emotional and physical well-being.

Young people benefit from excellent support to promote their educational achievement. They benefit from good attendance at school or alternative educational provision. The educational achievement of young people is exceptionally positive, taking into account both their attainment and progress from their starting points. A social worker reported, 'Her attendance at school has dramatically improved as has her participation at activities to promote her relationships and interactions with peers.'

Young people are supported to pursue further education or employment as part of their effective preparation for adulthood. Staff have consistently high aspirations for all young people.

The home's centralised location ensures young people benefit from excellent access to local amenities. Young people benefit from a warm, welcoming and comfortable environment, that meets their needs and characteristics. The home is extremely well resourced, it provides young people with a gymnasium, beauty salon, art studio and games room. Consequently, young people are able to access a range of positive, enjoyable activities.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people report they enjoy living at the home, where they are kept safe and enjoy a strong sense of personal safety. Young people feel protected and are protected from abuse, bullying, neglect and exploitation. There are no current concerns about bullying or young people placing themselves, or other young people, at risk of significant harm. Young people are not engaged in dangerous, high risk-taking activities.

Risks associated with young people's particular vulnerabilities are identified clearly. Clear risk assessments and individual behaviour management strategies are effectively used to protect young people and minimise the risk of them coming to harm. Staff place young people's safety at the centre of their practice, while enabling them to take reasonable risks as part of their growth and natural development.

Staff employed to care for young people are selected and vetted carefully, to assess their suitability to work with children. This helps ensure young people are protected from abuse. Staff are trained in child protection so they know how to deal with allegations and report suspected abuse. Investigations into allegations made by young people are handled professionally and in a way that provides young people with appropriate support and protection.

Staff are trained in care and control which enables them to manage young people's challenging behaviours safely. Restraint is only ever used as a last resort, to protect young people from injury. Sanctions to address unacceptable behaviour are used fairly and proportionately. Young people's positive behaviour is promoted through the positive use of incentives and rewards. As a result, young people learn to develop socially acceptable behaviour.

A young person said, 'You get lots of support. If you play ball you'll go far and you'll get somewhere. I'd say they do listen to us and they teach us there's always an alternative.' A social worker reported, 'X displayed very challenging and extreme behaviours and the staff have worked well with her. X had no routines and liked to control all situations and the team have worked hard to ensure consistent and fair boundaries which X is now responding to... X did not have any positive relationships with professionals, but it is fair to say that X relates well to a couple of the team.'

The home has a joint protocol and procedure for reporting young people missing. Staff implement the policy to promote young people's safe return, if they are absent or go missing. As a result, missing young people receive good support and protection. However, despite the positive use of the policy, to date there is little evidence that the frequency with which young people go missing has reduced.

Young people benefit from a physically safe and appropriately secure environment. The routine maintenance of the building is managed in a way that promotes young

people's safety. The only irregularity identified, within the otherwise positive arrangements made to promote health and safety, is that the response time to fire drills is inconsistent, in terms of the time taken to evacuate the premises safely.

Leadership and management

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

Young people benefit from a home that is managed efficiently and effectively. The manager makes positive use of the home's rigorous monitoring activities to promote, sustain and improve the quality of young people's care. As a result, the manager has a good understanding of the home's strengths and weaknesses. The home's track record and previous inspection history demonstrate its capacity for continuing improving. Recommendations from the previous inspection have been met to promote young people's education. All young people living at the home now attend school or alternative provision.

Development plans are in place and these are used to secure and improve the future operation of the home. The home continues to meet the aims and objectives of its Statement of Purpose. The document, however, does not reflect the home's current staffing arrangements. Targets for the future operation of the home are realistic and challenging. The home is adequately resourced and there are no issues with the home's financial viability.

Young people benefit from well-trained, highly skilled, suitably qualified and experienced staff. Staff have access to high quality training to enable them to further their skills and keep up to date with professional practice developments. As a result, the training needs of staff are identified and well met. The home employs sufficient staff to meet the needs and numbers of young people.

Staff receive regular supervision and support, which enables them to undertake their duties professionally and provide a high quality service. Staff are enthusiastic about their roles and their efforts are channelled effectively. The home can demonstrate the positive impact it has made to young people's lives and how their outcomes have improved overtime. A social worker reported: '[The home] has provided a high level of support for young people in their care... In general, I am pleased with the quality of the young people's care and feel that their outcomes have improved as a result of their time there.'

Significant events relating to the protection of young people are reported to the appropriate authorities. However, significant events are not always sent to Ofsted within the recommended timescale.

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.