

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Michael McCleave
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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 is a local authority managed children's home providing six residential placements for young people aged between 10 and 17 years. The accommodation consists of six single bedrooms and spacious communal areas for eating, studying and relaxing. Young people have access to a computer to enable them to keep in contact with family and friends using the internet.

The home is in a residential area and is close to a shopping area and public transport. One of the main aims of the setting is to support young people to reach their full potential and to prepare them for independence.

Overall effectiveness

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

This home is well managed and staff work positively to ensure the safety and well-being of the young people.

The young people are making good progress given their starting points when initially admitted to the home. However, educational achievement for some of them is not as positive as might be expected. Staff nevertheless, work proactively to support and encourage school attendance.

Staff have a clear understanding of their safeguarding responsibilities and the young people know that any issues or concerns will be dealt with appropriately by staff. The relationship between the staff and young people is based on trust and respect and this is reflected in the low level of restraint used at the home.

This home positively promotes equality and diversity. Young people are actively encouraged to value cultural differences in people and to respect each other.

Records are appropriately maintained and clear information is contained in care plans, however, some records have not been as robustly monitored for quality as others. The young people's case records are well maintained containing a good account of their life history.

The young people live in a safe environment and their care is provided by a team of staff who are professionally committed to their welfare.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure children are supported to achieve their educational or training goals (NMS 8.4)
- ensure there is a system in place to monitor the quality and adequacy of record keeping and take action when needed. (NMS 22.1)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

The young people have experienced a variety of traumatic events that resulted in their move to this home. A key area of work undertaken by staff, is the need to work with the individual young people, to help them develop their self-confidence and to deal with the issues that affect their emotional well-being. Each young person has a key worker who is responsible for working with them on their care plan. Respect for the religious and cultural needs of young people is embedded into the professional ethos at the home. The staff have worked successfully; some with young people to enhance their cultural pride in their dress and appearance. In other cases sensitive work has taken place over a breakdown in relationships between young people and their parents over cultural expectations.

The home ensures that young people are able to access appropriate services to help them with personal and emotional issues. In some cases, the cost has been met out of the home's budget to secure resources in a timely way to meet the urgent needs of the young people concerned.

The achievements of young people to achieve their educational potential is not consistent. Some are attending school and doing well academically, whilst others have a poor attendance records. There does not appear to be an effective strategy with social workers to manage non-school attendance. This has resulted in some young people spending all their time at the home with minimal input from the educational sector. Staff actively attempt to engage with the young people concerned to involve them some limited educational work. This is not always successful.

Young people are encouraged to engage with the wider community. They have recently participated in a local carnival to raise much needed money for local projects and for the home's social funds. This was a positive event demonstrating the commitment of the young people to their home and for a worthy community cause benefitting other people.

Contact arrangements are supported by staff, and young people benefit from the continuing links with their families. These arrangements are subject to any limitations set out in care plans. Contact can take place at the home if required, and staff ensure that the parents are welcomed and made to feel at ease. These can be sensitive occasions and staff are on hand to facilitate as required.

Staff support young people as they move towards independent living. This is enhanced through showing young people how to manage budgets by going out with staff to shop for food and to manage limited funds. There are suitable facilities in the home's kitchen to enable young people to experience how to prepare a meal and to carry out basic domestic tasks in the kitchen.

Quality of care

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

The staff and young people at this home enjoy good relationships based on respect and trust. The behaviour of the young people reflects well on the way staff deal with difficult situations. This is through dialogue and by staff setting a good example keeping a calm atmosphere at the home. The young people themselves appreciate the positive relationships with staff. They spoke of the manager as being 'friendly and good fun'. An important part of life in the home is the involvement of the young people in decision making on certain matters. The young people's weekly meeting is a key forum for seeking their views. This enables them to discuss a variety of issues with staff from planning meals, social activities and trips out to places of interest. A good demonstration of the contribution young people make to life of the home is that young people are involved in the recruitment and selection process for new staff. It is also an example of how the home supports equality and diversity. The young people are aware of their right to complain about issues that concern them. They are confident however, that most issues can be dealt with informally at the home.

The care plans for each young person clearly outline the areas of work required in order to meet their individual needs. The key workers report weekly on the progress being made against the young person's care plan. This ensures that young people are involved with their key worker to discuss any issues relating to their plan. The young people confirm that they are consulted and are able to make their views known.

A important aspect of the quality of care provided, is in respect of the health needs of the young people. Health care plans are in place and these give a good indication of the individual health care resources required. The looked after children's nurse plays a key role in ensuring that appropriate resources are accessed to meet their physical, emotional and psychological health needs. The emphasis on a healthy living is enhanced by the proactive approach taken at the home, to encourage young people to take an interest in their personal health. The looked after children's nurse carries out a full health check on each young person on admission to the home. Any issues about diets are managed appropriately. The home supports young people to attend a local gym and membership fees are paid. These measures promote the health of the young people.

The staff support and encourage young people to value their education. There are quiet places within the home for young people to carry out homework. A member of staff is designated as the education champion to ensure that all educational issues are managed. This is a supportive role working alongside the key worker. Attendance at school and behaviour issues form the main areas of contact with schools. There are some difficulties currently being experienced in this area of work in respect of school attendance and support from other services. Where religious or cultural needs are identified for young people, the staff are proactive in seeking resources from appropriate sources within the local community.

The home is located close to public transport routes leading to the town centre and to all amenities. It is well maintained and comfortably furnished. There are two well-equipped rooms where young people can relax and socialise. Bedrooms are

appropriately furnished and individually decorated individual taste of the young person.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Safeguarding is a strong feature at this home. Young people feel safe and they are confident that staff will ensure their safety and well being at all times. All staff are aware of their safeguarding responsibilities and they have completed the appropriate training required by the council. There clear are procedures in place to guide staff if a young person were to go missing. Records indicate that young people rarely run away from the home. The more common situations are those who fail to return at agreed times.

Staff pride themselves on the low incidence level of physical restraint used at the home. There is a positive emphasis on de-escalation of difficult or tense situations involving young people. Staff always attempt to engage verbally with young people, rather than respond to behavioural situations through the use of restraint. Staff base their approach on the positive relationships built up with the young people to diffuse difficult or tense situations. Young people feel that any sanctions imposed are generally fair.

The robust recruitment and selection procedures in place promote the safety of the young people. All applicants for employment are fully vetted and cleared before taking up their positions at the home. Appointments are not confirmed until there is a successful completion of a probationary period of induction.

There have been no allegations or investigations of affecting staff since the last inspection.

The home is physically a safe environment for the young people and staff. There are suitable windows in all rooms with restricted openings and entrance doors are equipped with good quality locks to prevent unauthorised entry. All required safety checks on fire, gas, electrical and domestic appliances have been carried out. Simulated fire evacuations are regularly undertaken involving staff and young people. These measures ensure the safety of everyone working and living at the home.

Leadership and management

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

The management of the home is effective. It is based on a clear commitment to ensuring that young people are well cared for and that the home is operating efficiently. The recommendation made at the last inspection relating to staff signing restraint records has been met. This demonstrates a commitment to improved practice. An up-to-date Statement of Purpose outlines the aims and objectives of the home. This document is known to staff who are committed to ensuring that high standards of care emphasised in the statement is upheld in their day to day professional practice.

There is a positive attitude towards ensuring equality and diversity is fully supported and encouraged by staff throughout the home. The religious and cultural needs of young people are met and young people are actively involved in the life of the home. They are encouraged to show respect for each other irrespective of cultural differences.

Management oversight of operations works well and key documents are monitored to ensure that the care provided for the young people continues to meet the requirements of the care plan. This is complemented with day-to-day discussions with young people about their views on how they feel about life at the home. The manager is committed to ensuring that the home offers young people a caring and well-managed, safe environment to live.

The staffing numbers are sufficient to ensure safe operations. There are currently some vacancies among the staff team and the home relies on agency staff to maintain a safe level of staff on duty. There are clear arrangements in place for two senior members of staff to deputise in the absence of the manager. They are experienced in staff supervision and work effectively to ensure staff on duty are supported.

Staff are well trained to carry out their duties and a comprehensive training schedule is available for staff to improve their skills and competences. Formal supervision for staff is well established and these meetings identify their training and developmental needs. The staff team are positively motivated and supported by the manager.

Records are stored securely in the main office. Where records are computerised, these are only accessed by authorised staff. The approach to confidentiality is good and staff have a clear understanding of their responsibilities to maintain accurate records of their work with the young people. These records contribute to an understanding of the young person's life. The management team are responsible for monitoring the quality of records. Some medicines administration records, however, do not identify the reasons why some medicines have not been administered to young people. This was not identified during routine records checks. The manager is currently addressing this shortfall in records monitoring.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.

