

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Stella Henderson
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The children's home is provided by a local authority and cares for up to six young people with emotional or 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 the good quality support provided by the home. As with all adolescents, their positive development is not always linear. Overall, however young people make steady progress from their starting points on admission to the home.

Individualised planning, intervention and review is tailored to the diverse needs of young people. All young people are in full-time education and achieving within their level of capability. Safe practice is embedded in all aspects of practice and young people, their parents and professionals say that they are safe at the home.

The home enjoys strong support from senior management, commitment from the staff team and robust internal monitoring. The acting manager has implemented a number of changes which have had a positive impact on young people. There is realistic assessment about the home's performance and a clear improvement agenda for the home. As a result no recommendations are raised at this inspection; however a requirement is set to speed the process for the manager's registration with Ofsted.

Areas for improvement

Statutory Requirements

This section sets out the actions which must be taken so that the registered person/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Reg.	Requirement	Due date
7 (2001)	appoint an individual to manage the children's home. (Regulation 7(1))	24/06/2013

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people benefit from full attendance at either mainstream school or alternative provision which maximises their educational opportunities. Some show real motivation by taking additional classes for revision. As a result they make good progress with regard to their educational targets and achieve their goals, showing improvement in their predicted grades.

Some young people have been successful in securing modern apprenticeships and others undertake voluntary work to prepare them for the world of work. This, along with engaging in practical tasks such as meal planning, laundry and budgeting, helps to develop their skills for independence.

Young people's sense of identity and self-worth is reinforced through the promotion of contact with family members and positive relationships with staff. One social worker commented that staff were always willing to facilitate contact and 'ensure it has been positive by providing appropriate advice and support when issues are raised by the young person.' This assists young people to manage their feelings appropriately and begin to understand the complexities of their lives.

One parent commented that their child 'looks fit and healthy', and young people generally enjoy good health. They eat well, sleep well and have access to resources to help them manage their sexual health needs, smoking and drug use. One social worker noted, in respect of one young person, that 'staff have always provided practical help in attending health appointments and provided emotional support to ensure the young person's health care needs are identified and supported.'

Young people are of an age where they make their own decisions about pursuing sporting and leisure interests, and in common with their peers dip in and out of these activities as they wish.

Quality of care

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

Young people, even those who test the boundaries of acceptable behaviour, feel that staff do their best to help them. One young person commented that staff were welcoming and that, 'they have done their best and supported me but I am making my own choices.'

As with any good parent, staff persuade, cajole, use praise and incentives and set clear boundaries to help young people modify their behaviours and make good progress. There is strong liaison between staff and professionals in health, substance misuse agencies, the youth offending team and police. This enables young people to receive the best possible advice, guidance and support even if they choose sometimes not to accept it.

Young people are therefore treated and respected as individuals and their plans, incentives and targets are tailored specifically to their needs. Key worker sessions underpin the care planning process, which enables young people to discuss their progress, problems and learn from any temporary setbacks.

Overall, plans are of good quality are regularly reviewed and set clear objectives. An independent reviewing officer (IRO) noted that, in respect of one young person, staff were successful in fully implementing the care plan, particularly in 'getting alongside' the young person and enabling their 'engagement with education'.

Parents feel that their children are well looked after. They comment positively on their children's appearance and say the staff keep them well-informed. Parents are confident that their children would say if they were unhappy with things at the home. Young people contribute their views and opinions on day-to-day decisions and the running of the home. This includes young people's meetings, contact with the Regulation 33 visitor and frequent engagement with staff.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people are safe at the home, and parents feel that their children are in a safe place. A social worker noted that, 'young people are looked after well and are kept safe.'

Each young person's individual risks are clearly understood and staff demonstrate they have a well-informed professional understanding of presenting behaviours. Staff draw on theories and approaches to inform their practice, such as restorative justice.

Young people's emotional behaviours are clearly understood by staff and they successfully implement tailored approaches to support young people. This helps young people to deal with change, challenges and set-backs, which bolsters their emotional resilience.

On those occasions where young people place themselves at risk, they are protected by the actions of staff to safeguard them. 'Missing from home' incidents are infrequent, but where these occur staff follow appropriate procedures to ensure young people's safe return.

An independent reviewing officer (IRO) commented in relation to one young person that staff, 'went the extra mile' to find out where the young person was. The IRO noted that: 'They could give me full details of what they'd done to find out where the young person was and what they were doing about it. They could answer all my questions - they'd covered everything I would expect them to and more and could always reassure me that the young person was clean and well-nourished on their return.'

Social workers comment positively on staff practice where child protection matters are concerned, noting in one instance that: 'the key worker has attended all meetings such as case conferences and core groups. They are willing to listen to advice and will follow through with the advice that has been given to them.'

Currently there are no instances of bullying in the home, but one parent commented that 'there was a problem with bullying, but that was sorted out straight away'. Such risks are clearly assessed for each individual young person and protective measures implemented to ensure their safety.

Leadership and management

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

The home currently has experienced acting manager from within the local authority and has a good track record of ensuring successful outcomes for young people. Currently no application for is logged for registration with Ofsted.

Young people nevertheless live in a home that is well-managed. There is a strong sense of team purpose and young people's needs are central to practice and discussion. Parents and professionals comment positively on communication with staff and good working relationships. Staff are experienced and have a wide repertoire of skills, and they report that they are well-supported in their work. The local authority demonstrates a commitment to professional development through regular supervision, team meetings and training opportunities.

A focus on driving improvement provides the platform which enables young people to experience good quality care. As a result of sound monitoring, the manager has a keen understanding of the strengths and needs of the home and is making solid progress in developing the service for the benefit of young people. In this task he has effective support from the staff team, senior management and independent scrutiny of the home. Recommendations from the last inspection regarding written communication, supervision, promotion of welfare and training have all been met with consequent positive impact for young people.

Young people have sufficient numbers of staff to meet their needs. The team remains stable which provides them with consistency and predictability. Recording is generally good and provides a picture of young people's daily lives. Young people's information is securely stored which protects their safety and privacy.

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.