

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Steve Pearson
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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 children's home is provided by a charitable organisation and cares for up to eight young people of either gender aged 10 to 17 years old. It is registered to care for young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Overall effectiveness

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

The registered manager and staff are caring for young people very well. They are knowledgeable, experienced and motivated to provide best outcomes. They are very effective at enabling all young people to succeed in education. They also excel at enabling young people to be fit and healthy. A detached house next to the children's home provides superb facilities to enable young people to develop skills that will be useful when they have left care. Two young people can live here independently with appropriate low level supervision by staff.

Young people's behaviour is generally settled although some can display highly challenging behaviour and it is sometimes necessary for the staff to use restraint to promote safety. Recruitment decisions are not fully-informed because young people are not involved in helping to choose new staff.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- where practicable, enable young people to be involved in the recruitment of staff in the home. (NMS 16.8)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people feel they have a significant say in how the home is run. This helps them to feel valued and significant. It also helps them to develop a strong sense of identity and maturity which is reflected in their progress and behaviour.

Young people are fit and healthy. They can take part in a wide range of sporting

activities including a fully fitted gym on site. This helps to ensure young people get plenty of exercise. None of the young people smoke and there is a strong consensus among them that smoking is unhealthy and should be avoided. Young people said 'we see the doctor, dentist and optician regularly. The staff give us healthy food and they listen to what food we say we like and don't like'.

Outcomes associated with education are excellent. All young people attend schools or colleges and they travel independently. Achievement levels are high and attendance levels are over 95%. The home provides young people with access to two computers and they can use the internet and make and receive emails.

Young people are fully supported to maintain and develop relationships with their families and with friends. The staff give each a mobile phone and top-up credit every month. They can also send free text messages at any time. This helps to promote contact and helps to keep young people safe.

All young people who sent in a survey to Ofsted said that the staff help them to learn skills which will be useful when they leave care and live independently. At the inspection, one young person said 'the staff trust us to go into shops alone so we learn how to do things for ourselves'. The home has a separate three bed detached house next to the main house. Two young people can live independently here as the house is self-contained with a kitchen, laundry etc. The facilities are excellent and young people can gain a realistic understanding of what life in their own home will be like. A member of staff provides appropriate supervision to ensure young people progress appropriately.

Quality of care

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

Young people have a significant say in how the home operates. A house meeting is held every week and their views are recorded and acted on. The meetings are effective, for example, one young person said 'the meetings do work, I said what hobby I'd like to try and it was sorted'. Young people also know how to raise concerns formally and informally and such concerns are dealt with quickly and thoroughly.

The staffing levels are good and the staff provide suitable amounts of one-to-one time with young people. This helps to ensure their individual needs are met. Young people said 'we can buy the clothes and toiletries that we want'. The staff also enable any cultural needs to be met well. This helps young people to develop a clear and unique identity.

Overall, behaviour is generally settled although instances of challenging behaviour arise from time to time. The recording of incidents is thorough and the staff always encourage young people to add their own comments and signature. Any reported or actual injuries are also reported. Sometimes the staff administer sanctions as a result of inappropriate behaviour and young people feel these are fair. They also reward

positive behaviour. Young people and staff confirmed that there is very little bullying but there can be name-calling. Effective counter-bullying measures are in place. For example, a member of staff has special responsibility for monitoring the level of bullying and the staffing levels are high enough to provide for good levels of supervision.

The staff enable young people to be very healthy. They have regular check-ups with health professionals and young people can gain support from agencies who provide expertise in promotion of emotional health.

The staff enable young people to take part in a wide and stimulating range of activities including trips away and participation in clubs in the community. This enables young people to socialise and develop friendships with other young people who do not live in the home. This raises their esteem and helps them develop social skills. The home also has a fully equipped gym and a member of staff is trained to assess and supervise them to a professional standard.

The building is clean, appropriately furnished and decorated and is well maintained apart from some toilet roll holders and a window covering in the bathroom that are missing. Effective arrangements are in place to help ensure that the home only admits young people whose needs can be met. The manager and responsible individual assess needs thoroughly and they consider the needs of the current group of residents before deciding to admit anyone to the home.

The staff also fully support young people to be involved in the content of their care plans. Each young person has a key worker (and a 'co key worker' for when the key worker is absent). These people represent the views of young people at statutory review meetings and they meet with young people regularly to ensure the care plans are effective. They also write monthly summaries of progress and monitor trends of behaviour effectively.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Sometimes the staff restrain young people but this is only done when necessary to protect people's safety or to prevent significant damage to property. Most young people do not get restrained but for some it can be quite often. Not all young people are happy about how they are restrained, claiming that sometimes they experience some pain or discomfort. However this is not due to inappropriate handling techniques and all incidents are fully recorded to provide maximum accountability. The staff receive training twice a year in how to respond to challenging behaviour.

Of the four surveys received back from young people, two said they 'sometimes' feel safe in the children's home, one said they 'usually' felt safe and one said they 'always' felt safe. The staff conduct a comprehensive risk assessment on the hazards that may affect young people and the outcomes of the assessment are recorded

clearly.

Young people very rarely go missing from the home although an up-to-date protocol is in place which reflects the latest government guidance. Any such occasions are recorded comprehensively.

The premises are maintained in a safe condition. Professional technicians regularly service the electrical equipment, gas appliances and equipment for preventing, detecting and extinguishing fires.

Appropriate arrangements are also in place to ensure that staff recruited to work with young people are suitable and safe. However young people are not involved in the recruitment of new staff. This means the selection process is not as well-informed as it could be and young people do not have an adequate say in who will be looking after them. This was summed up by one young person who said 'we are not involved in choosing the staff who work here but we should be as it's our home'.

The staff receive regular training in child protection procedures and they are knowledgeable and understand how to respond to allegations, suspicions or evidence of harm.

Leadership and management

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

The three recommendations made at the previous inspection have been met. As a result, there is greater accountability because the young people are now encouraged to write or have their views about restraints recorded in a bound book; the bound book of restraints and consequences for negative behaviour contains numbered pages and the staff do not rely solely on jargon to record how they conducted a restraint.

The home has a clear Statement of Purpose and the children's guide is informative and has been updated to reflect the new government guidance. The home is being managed effectively. A strong management structure is in place which includes effective support for the Registered Manager who, with the deputy and three senior staff, oversee the team of staff.

The Registered Manager receives monthly budget summaries to check on spending of resources. A development plan is updated once a year to consider the longer term strategic plans for the home.

The staffing levels are good and this enables plenty of one-to-one support for young people. Several staff have left the home to work in other children's homes which the provider has set up recently. However the home has continued to function effectively despite these changes.

The staff receive significant amounts of training and all the established staff are fully

qualified in caring for young people. New staff receive induction training to the standards set by the Children's Workforce Development Council. All the staff also receive regular one-to-one supervision every month and these sessions are recorded for clarity. The staff also receive an annual appraisal of their performance.

Effective quality assurance arrangements are in place. An external person visits the home once a month to assess the quality of care provided. The visitor seeks the views of all relevant stakeholders such as young people, parents, relatives and placing authorities. They also assess all the issues required by legislation and they make recommendations when necessary which are then assessed at the next visit. The Registered Manager also monitors all necessary aspects of care every month.

Records are kept securely and young people can read and add to their case files as appropriate. This helps them feel involved and respected.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.