

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Thomas Webber
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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 home is one of a number of children's homes operated by a local authority. The home provides care and accommodation to five young people who may have emotional and/or behaviour difficulties. The home is an admissions unit where the intention is to move young people into more suitable accommodation such as return to their parental home, identified foster placement, preparation for independent living or a settled care residential children's unit.

Overall effectiveness

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

The home provides young people with an overall good standard of care with some outstanding features. Young people benefit from living at a home where positive relationships exist between young people and staff. Young people are very appreciative of the care and support they receive. Staff demonstrate a very strong commitment in supporting the needs of young people with good progress is being achieved. The needs and views of young people are central to the development and operation of the home. Robust safeguarding practices are established which promote the safety and welfare of young people. There is a strong emphasis on supporting young people to develop both socially and educationally. Young people benefit from living at a home which is well managed. Effective leadership ensures that young people enjoy stability and consistency of care.

Areas of improvement identified relate to staff meetings and improvements to the home's monitoring process and the individual personal plans produced by young people. However, these do not impact significantly on the care provided to young people.

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 all staff have access to the advice needed to provide a comprehensive service for young people by having the opportunity to attend all staff meetings (NMS 19.7).
- ensure that Regulation 34 reports provide sufficient detail to monitor the patterns and trends within the home as part of the quality assurance process (NMS 21.2).
- ensure that the personal plans compiled by young people sufficiently reflect their

individual care plans (NMS 25.1).

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Staff demonstrate a very strong commitment in supporting the needs of young people with good progress having been achieved. This is also acknowledged by young people. Young people also benefit from the individualised support they receive which helps them to develop a positive view of themselves. Staff actively encourage and assist young people to develop their own identities whilst recognising the identities of others. The home's expectations, rules and routines provide young people with an environment that focuses on positive outcomes.

Young people are fully supported and enabled to keep in touch with their families. Staff are very committed to maintaining the level of agreed contact between young people and their families according to their individual circumstances. Opportunities are available for young people to make and receive telephone calls in private. Effective systems are well established to keep parents and respective social workers up to date regarding the welfare and progress of young people.

Young people are supported and encouraged to attend educational facilities to attain their educational achievement. Further education or employment is also facilitated where appropriate. However, success in these areas is often difficult to achieve but staff work extremely hard to facilitate this wherever possible.

Young people live in an environment where their physical and healthcare needs are well met. They are also fully supported, where appropriate, to develop independent life and social skills to equip them to cope with the transition of moving onto independent living. These opportunities enable them to budget, shop, prepare and cook their own meals with the support of staff. Young people are also involved with some cleaning and undertaking their own washing.

Quality of care

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

Young people live in a caring, welcoming and relaxed environment. Good and supportive relationships exist between staff and young people. The staff team work hard to ensure that the needs and wishes of young people are met. They also undertake their duties in a warm, supportive and professional manner. Young people, who commented, are appreciative of the care and support provided to them and their overall experience of living at the home. Young people are relaxed and at ease in the company of staff and within their environment.

Young people are supported to eat a healthy, varied and balanced diet. The likes and dislikes of young people are well known to staff. Young people are fully consulted in the planning of menus. They are also provided with opportunities to try meals from a

variety of cultures. Young people, who commented, spoke extremely positively about the quality and quantity of meals provided.

The healthcare needs of young people are fully met. They are registered with appropriate healthcare services and are supported to attend all appointments. Specialist intervention is also provided to young people who require specific input. Support, advice and information are also readily available to young people on a range of other healthcare issues. Appropriate systems are well established for the safe storage, receipt, administration and disposal of unwanted medication for the protection of young people.

The home operates an open culture of consultation with young people through fortnightly meetings and on a daily basis. These opportunities enable young people to raise and discuss any concerns as well as to make positive suggestions regarding the running of the home. Management fully consider all comments made by young people which are actioned, where appropriate, to improve the delivery of care provided.

Previous records show that the worries or concerns of young people are taken seriously, responded to and addressed without delay. Clear policies and procedures are well established for dealing with complaints. Young people know how to complain and are supported to raise any issues of concern openly. There has been no complaints received since May 2010. However, the home has improved the recording of complaints to ensure whether or not young people are satisfied with the action taken. The complaints process ensures that appropriate outcomes are achieved for young people.

The needs of young people are fully assessed which are reflected in their comprehensive, individual care plans. These outline their strengths, needs, progress made and outcomes achieved as well as the objectives of the placements. The heritage of young people is also well respected and reflected within their care plans. These documents provide staff with clear guidance on how to meet the needs of young people on a daily basis. Personal care plans are also established by young people. However, these do not sufficiently reflect the level of care as outlined in their care plans. Staff recognise this deficiency and are working towards addressing this issue. Young people's statutory reviews are held at the recommended intervals where they are fully supported and encouraged to attend and contribute to their reviews.

Staff fully promote the education of young people to ensure that they attain their educational potential. Young people attend various educational placements which are tailored to meet their individual needs. A positive incentive system is used to encourage good attendance at school. Young people's attendance varies depending on their individual circumstances, with some being very good. All successes are fully celebrated by the staff. Staff attend young people's school reviews as well as parents' evenings and other special events. Good communication and liaison is maintained between the home and young people's educational placements. Young people are also provided with suitable facilities to engage in private study.

Young people are actively encouraged to pursue personal interests and hobbies both within the home and the wider community. However, most young people are of an age where they prefer not to partake in organised activities. Although opportunities are available to them to undertake such activities, most prefer to organise their leisure time themselves tending to spend time with friends and family.

The design and location of the home is suitable for its stated function. Young people live in an environment which is maintained to a good standard being clean, tidy and comfortable. It is also well-furnished and in good decorative order. The home provides young people with sufficient communal space, bath, shower and toilet facilities to meet their individual and collective needs. Young people are provided with their own bedrooms which are personalised to their individual tastes. Suitable locks are fitted to young people's bedroom doors as well as to the communal bathing and toilet facilities. These promote the privacy and dignity of young people. Suitable laundry facilities are provided to meet the needs of the home.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people live in a safe environment where their welfare is fully promoted. Young people feel safe living at the home and that staff genuinely care about them and their welfare. They also feel confident in discussing any concerns or worries with staff. All staff receive safeguarding training which focuses on the protection of young people. A copy of the Local Safeguarding Children Board policies and procedures together with their contact details are readily available to staff. Management, as part of this process, maintain an open and supportive dialogue with young people, their respective social workers and the local safeguarding team. There have been no safeguarding issues since the last inspection.

Staff respond appropriately to all incidents where young people go missing to ensure their protection and safe return at the earliest opportunity. This is in line with the individual agreed protocols based on the particular needs and risks of young people. Clear recording and reporting systems are also now well established with comprehensive records being maintained. These detail the reasons for young people's absences and any action taken in the light of those reasons. All relevant people are kept fully informed of any incidents. The number of incidents, where young people have gone missing, have significantly reduced since October 2011.

Effective measures are taken to protect young people from bullying. A clear anti-bullying policy is established which is conveyed to young people. Bullying is minimised by staff taking prompt action to challenge and defuse any disagreements between young people. Young people and staff do not currently see bullying as an area of concern.

Young people live in an environment where they are supported to develop positive behaviour. This is achieved through praise, encouragement, positive reinforcement

and a reward system. Sanctions and restraints are also used. However, these methods of control are kept to a minimum. Staff are well trained in the use of physical intervention. Appropriate records of sanctions and restraints are being maintained. Physical intervention and separate individual behaviour management plans are also well established for young people. These provide staff with clear strategies on how to consistently manage the challenging behaviour of young people.

Robust staff recruitment practices are established to ensure the protection of young people. These practices ensure that new staff are suitably vetted and do not commence employment in the home until all the relevant checks have been carried out.

Health and safety policy and practice guidelines are well established to ensure that staff and young people are appropriately safeguarded. No specific health and safety issues were identified from a tour of the building. Young people and staff regularly practise fire evacuation procedures and the various health and fire safety records are accurate and up to date.

Leadership and management

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

Young people benefit from living at a home which is well managed by a Registered Manager who is suitably qualified and experienced. The manager is supported by two assistant unit managers who, together, demonstrate effective leadership. This structure enables the home to effectively monitor the day to day care provided to young people which ensures that they, in turn, enjoy stability and consistency of care. The manager has successfully addressed the two requirements and four recommendations raised at the last inspection.

The home's Statement of Purpose clearly outlines its aims and objectives. This document also describes the level of service young people can expect to receive and how it is delivered. This information is readily available to all interested parties. A young people's welcome guide is also produced which provides them and their parents with clear information that they need to know about the home. These documents now refer to the use of alarms being fitted to young people's bedroom doors and the use of a key fob system to access the outer doors of the home.

The organisation ensures that monthly unannounced visits are undertaken to monitor the welfare and care provided to young people. Reports are produced outlining these visits and any actions needed to improve the outcomes for young people. These reports now also routinely reflect comments made by young people and staff about the care and welfare provided. The manager ensures that monthly Regulation 34 reports are completed. However these reports do not provide sufficient information to monitor the patterns and trends within the home as part of the quality assurance process.

The home is committed to providing sufficient staff on duty. A minimum of two care

staff are on duty throughout the waking day. However, additional staff are deployed on some evenings to provide opportunities for staff to undertake individual work with young people. The hours worked by the manager are additional to these staffing levels. Two staff sleep-in each night. Young people continue to be cared for by a very stable staff team who have a variety of experience in working with young people. This ensures that the individual and collective needs of young people are appropriately met.

Staff feel well supported in their roles through regular formal and informal supervision, daily handovers, regular staff meetings and team planning days. These systems ensure that staff are kept up to date in all matters relating to the home and young people. However, the current staff meeting system does not provide all staff with the opportunity to attend and influence decisions made in relation to the management of young people. The manager is aware of this deficiency and intends to review this process.

Young people are looked after by a staff team who are trained and competent to meet their individual and collective needs. Most staff (93%) are trained to the National Vocational Qualification Level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People. Staff value the additional training opportunities provided to them to develop their knowledge, expertise and competence. This is reflected in the care practice and positive outcomes achieved for young people which is very much appreciated by those who contributed to the inspection process.

The records of young people are complete and are securely stored. Young people's placement plans clearly reflect their individual histories and needs. This information enables staff to effectively care for them. Any significant events relating to the protection of young people are routinely notified to all relevant parties. Staff ensure that young people's placing social workers are kept well informed and are regularly updated of their progress and well-being.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.