

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 for five young people of either sex, aged 11 to 17 years at any one time, who may be experiencing emotional or behavioural difficulties.

Overall effectiveness

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

The home provides a good standard of care where young people have made significant progress. They also benefit from living at the home where positive relationships between young people and staff are well established. Young people are appreciative of the care and support they receive from the very committed and dedicated staff team. Young people continue to live within a warm, nurturing, caring and supportive environment where their needs and views are central to the development and operation of the home. Robust safeguarding practices promote the safety and welfare of young people. There is an 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 of care.

Areas for development include the need to provide staff with specialist support in relation to challenging behaviour and to seek the views of staff and young people as part of the external monitoring visits.

Areas for improvementStatutory 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
33 (2001)	ensure that interviews are routinely held with young people and staff and their views are reflected within the reports in order to form an opinion of the standard of care provided. (Regulation 33 (4)(a))	31/10/2011

Recommendations

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

- ensure that staff are provided with the necessary professional support to meet the challenging needs of young people. (NMS 19.4)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people live in an environment where their physical and health care needs are met. The home's expectations, rules and routines provide young people with an environment that focuses on positive outcomes. However, there have been occasions where staff have struggled to effectively manage the behaviour of some young people. This and the lack of specialist supervision has impacted on the outcomes for some young people. Despite the cost to some young people and the drain on staff resources, some young people have made significant progress within the home.

Young people are encouraged and supported to eat a healthy and varied diet. Staff fully support the cultural needs of young people and encourage them to gain an appreciation of a diversity of dishes. Young people commented very positively about the quality and quantity of food provided. They are also provided with opportunities to develop their independent life skills to equip them to cope with the transition into independent living.

A clear system has been established to support and monitor the educational attendance and progress of young people. Young people maintain good educational attendance. They are also supported and encouraged to attend further education, where appropriate, to fully realise their potential and ambitions.

Young people are fully supported to maintain the level of agreed contact between themselves and their families according to their individual wishes and circumstances. Staff also assist young people with the transport arrangements where agreed. Appropriate arrangements are also in place for young people to make and receive telephone calls, as well as to meet visitors, in private. Young people's families and their placing authorities are kept regularly informed of the progress made by young people and all matters relating to their well-being.

Quality of care

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

Young people live in a warm, welcoming, caring 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 are appreciative of the care and support provided to them and their overall experience of living at the home. Generally, young people are relaxed and at ease in the company of staff and within their environment.

The home operates a culture of consultation where young people are fully encouraged to contribute to and influence the way the home is run. Young people's meetings are well established. These enable them 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. Young people also make decisions about their lives on a daily basis.

Clear policies and procedures are established for dealing with complaints. Young people clearly understand this process and are supported to raise any issues of concern openly. Young people are confident about the process and feel their views are taken seriously. All complaints are responded to and addressed without delay. This ensures that appropriate outcomes are achieved.

Young people's needs are fully assessed which are reflected in their comprehensive, individual placement care plans. These outline the objectives of the placement, progress achieved and provide staff with clear guidance on how to meet young people's needs on a daily basis. Young people's plans are regularly updated to reflect significant events. 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.

Young people are registered with and supported to attend all healthcare appointments. Young people's health care needs are well reflected in their individual placement care plans. Although staff are persistent in seeking specialist services to support them to meet young people's specific psychological needs, the availability of appropriate resources is an ongoing challenge. 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.

Staff have been highly effective in promoting and supporting young people's attendance at school and their educational attainment. Staff also maintain strong links with education providers. Staff encourage young people's academic interests, both by offering homework support and by facilitating additional resources such as musical instruments. Staff are ambitious for young people's futures and young people can talk about university and career options. Young people are rightly proud of what they have attained and both their life chances and self-esteem have been enhanced as a result.

Young people are fully supported and encouraged to take part in community activities either independently or in the company of staff. Staff take responsibility for

ensuring that young people have the right equipment, travel options and finances to be fully involved. Young people are also actively encouraged to pursue personal interests and hobbies within the home.

Young people's skills and interests are identified and well met through the care planning process and daily living. These enable young people to develop both life skills and a sense of achievement. Young people's heritage is exceptionally well respected and effectively nurtured where appropriate through culture, food choices and hair and skin care.

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. Young people are provided with their own bedrooms which they have personalised to their individual tastes. A good level of communal space, bathing and toilet facilities are provided to effectively meet their individual and collective needs. 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. Alarms are fitted to young people's bedroom doors which are activated when there are child protection issues. 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. Staff are trained and competent in their knowledge of safeguarding and take appropriate action to ensure young people are protected from harm. Management, as part of this process, maintain an open and supportive dialogue with young people, their respective social workers and the local safeguarding team.

Until recently bullying has been as a major source of concern. A number of young people within the home had been adversely affected which resulted in them being relocated for their own protection. Staff take prompt action to challenge and defuse any incidents. Effective measures are in place to protect young people from bullying which are now coming to fruition with the reduction in the number of incidents.

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 young people's particular needs and risks. Clear recording and reporting systems are well established which ensure that relevant people are informed of any incidents.

Young people live in an environment where they are supported to develop positive behaviour. This is achieved through encouragement, reinforcement and positive behaviour incentives. Staff and young people have developed good relationships where there is positive interaction between them. Sanctions are rarely used although there has been an increase in physical interventions. Risk assessments are well

established. Young people's individual behaviour plans are incorporated within their individual placement care plans. These provide staff with clear guidance and strategies for supporting and managing the negative behaviours 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.

Robust health and safety policies and procedures are established to safeguard young people and staff. Young people and staff regularly practise fire evacuation procedures and the various fire safety records are accurate and up to date. These measures ensure that the living environment for young people and staff is physically safe and secure.

Leadership and management

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

Young people benefit from living at a home which is well managed. The Registered Manager demonstrates effective leadership which ensures that young people enjoy stability of care. The management team are extremely approachable and supportive which is very much appreciated by the staff team. Staff are well supported in their roles with daily handover and regular staff meetings being held. These systems ensure that staff are kept up to date in all matters relating to the home and young people.

Staff work well together to provide young people with continuity and consistency of care. Staff also value and welcome the regular staff supervision arrangements in place. These provide them with opportunities to raise and discuss any complex issues. However, formal supervision is currently not being provided at the greater frequency staff would normally expect to receive it. Staff sickness and the challenging behaviour of some young people has meant that the high standard aspired to by the manager has not been fully maintained.

Young people, staff and the placing social workers are clear about the aims and objectives of the home. These are clearly set out within the home's Statement of Purpose. This document also describes the level of service young people can expect to receive and how they will be cared for. This information is readily available to all relevant parties. A young people's guide is also produced which provides young people and their parents with clear information about the home.

Young people are looked after by a staff team who are trained and competent to meet their needs. The authority is fully committed to ensuring that all staff are trained to the required qualification with most staff now being trained. Staff are also supported to undertake a range of training to continually update and develop their knowledge, expertise and competence. This is reflected in the care delivered where positive outcomes are achieved for young people. However, staff are concerned that

the lack of availability of specialist support to assist them in dealing with the challenging behaviour displayed by some young people will counteract the positive aspects of their achievements with young people.

Staff have a variety of experience in the care of young people. The home ensures that good staffing levels are maintained to meet the individual and collective needs of young people throughout the day and night. This enables young people to receive continuity and consistency of care from a dedicated staff team.

The authority ensures that the care and welfare of young people are continually monitored through monthly, unannounced visits. Reports are produced outlining these visits and any action needed to improve the outcomes for young people. However, the comments of young people and staff are not routinely recorded which limits the effectiveness of the monitoring visits.

Equality and diversity practice is **outstanding**.