

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Bill Drumm
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home provides care and accommodation for up to 5 young people who have emotional and behavioural difficulties. It is provided by a local authority.

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**.

The home provides very good levels of care and support to young people some of whom are very vulnerable and have complex needs. Good, consistent management and trusting relationships combine to help keep young people safe from abuse or exploitation. In addition, young people have made very good progress since their admission. They continue to develop an awareness and understanding of how to keep themselves safe, they are continuing to develop socially acceptable behaviour and their self-confidence and self-esteem are improving. The atmosphere within the home is friendly, warm, relaxed and supportive. The young people have a great sense of humour, they are helpful, friendly and polite.

Young people are fully supported to attend school, college or training. Staff encourage young people to have aspirations for themselves and to work hard toward achieving them. Young people have access to a wide selection of leisure activities; physical, cultural, sporting or simply recreational. This helps to keep them occupied and provides them with opportunities to acquire confidence and take pleasure in their achievements. Contact with friends, family and relatives is, where appropriate, actively encouraged. This helps young people to remain in touch with those who are important to them.

Areas identified for improvement relate to: young people receiving feedback from their suggestions at young people's meetings; reviewing the content of individual risk assessments; involving young people more in their risk assessments and care plans and ensuring that missing from home records are completed fully and retained on each young person's file. These have not directly impacted on the safety and welfare of 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 children understand how their views have been taken into account, and where significant wishes or concerns are not acted upon, they are helped to understand why (NMS 1.2)
- ensure that the welfare and safety of children is promoted in the home (NMS 4.1)
- ensure that written records kept by the home when a child goes missing detail the actions taken by staff, the circumstances of the child's return, any reasons given by the child for running away and any action taken in light of those reasons (NMS 5.10)
- ensure that children understand within their level of understanding, the purpose and content of their plan and the reasoning behind any decisions about their care. (NMS 25.1)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people benefit a great deal from the support given to them by all staff at the home. Regular discussions and stimulating activities help staff to build good positive relationships with young people and, as a result, they gain a thorough knowledge and understanding of their own backgrounds and future plans.

Young people enjoy good health. Their health needs are clearly identified and both primary and secondary health care services are provided in a timely manner to meet those needs. Staff work hard to explain the health risks associated with smoking and drug or alcohol use. As a result, young people have a good understanding of these risks and are able to make informed choices about things that can affect their health and well-being.

All young people attend school or college and their attendance is good. All achievements, no matter how small are celebrated. This helps to improve their self-confidence and self-esteem. Young people spoken to said school was ok. Staff commented that they work very hard to get young people into education and, to keep them there. For some, regular attendance at school or college is a major improvement from their starting points. Young people are making good progress towards their desired educational targets which in turn helps them to build their self-confidence and self-esteem.

Where appropriate young people benefit from clear contact arrangements with significant people in their lives. This helps them to settle into the routine of the home

quickly and to enjoy seeing their families and friends. The facilitating of contact is done very well. Staff work very hard and proactively with parents, family members and placing social workers to promote positive outcomes. One young person said, 'I go off to see my brother regularly and that's important to me'. Maintaining contact with family and friends helps young people to develop their sense of identity.

Young people are able to pursue a diverse range of activities, hobbies and interests. For example, attending the gym, going on camping trips and raising money for charity. By supporting their individual choices young people are able to develop their social skills and community presence which in turn helps them to build their self-esteem and self-confidence.

Young people are encouraged and supported to become more independent. Young people learn activities for daily living such as cleaning and cooking whilst they are also given help and support with social skills, laundry, healthy eating, budgeting, clothing care and shopping. This helps them to make a successful transition into adulthood.

Quality of care

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

Young people living in this home benefit greatly from an experienced and caring staff team. Staff are very enthusiastic and committed to addressing young people's care and safety needs. One staff member said, 'one of the best things about the home is the very good quality of relationships that we build with the young people. It can be very hard at times but we keep trying and we refuse to give up'. Young people enjoy warm relationships with staff in the home and there is an excellent rapport between them based on mutual respect. Young people confirm this saying, 'I get on well with all the staff' and 'there is always someone to talk to if you want.'

The home has some good systems in place for seeking the views of young people about the way the home is run. Staff provide opportunities for group discussions, through regular house meetings or during activities such as camping trips. Each young person also has one-to-one key worker sessions. Notes of these sessions are retained and demonstrate clearly the interactions between staff and young people. Regular key worker meetings help young people to focus on important issues such as how to keep themselves safe as well as understanding when they have achieved success. However, written records of house meetings do not show clearly the outcome of suggestions made by young people about how the home is run or activities they would like to try. Young people may not therefore feel fully listened to.

Young people are confident and relaxed around staff and visitors. They said they are confident to complain if they need to and understand how to do so. There have been no complaints at the home since the last inspection.

Admissions to the home are carefully planned. No emergency admissions take place and the opinions and welfare of existing residents is fully considered before new

young people are introduced into the home. The home's manager and staff find out about young people's differences, routines, likes and dislikes, strengths and needs prior to admission and a phased introduction to the home is planned. In addition, each young person has a clear care plan outlining what their needs are and how they will be met. This helps to ensure that staff understand the needs of each young person and what services are required to meet those needs. However, the care plans do not show the full involvement of the young person themselves. This means that they may not be fully aware of what their placement at the home is meant to achieve.

Organised activities, such as swimming, walking and camping trips help to keep young people fit and healthy. Young people are encouraged to eat healthy foods and snacks and they are involved in planning, shopping for and cooking meals. Staff support and encourage young people to attend all routine appointments with dentists, doctors and opticians. In addition and where needed, young people also have access to the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service, which promotes their emotional well-being. Arrangements for dealing with day-to-day prescribed medication are safe and all staff have received up-to-date first aid training to help ensure that young people can receive emergency treatment.

The staff work, in a clear, organised and determined manner to fully support young people's education. They work in partnership with teaching staff to ensure each young person maintains their attendance. Staff have high aspirations for the young people they care for and want them to do well so that they can achieve their maximum potential. Close communication with professionals working in education ensures young people attend school and, as a result, young people are making good progress towards their desired achievement targets.

The young people live in a home that is very well located near to shops, leisure and education opportunities. The interior and exterior of the home are in a very good state of structural and decorative repair. There are several spacious and well-furnished communal areas where young people can relax and enjoy watching television, use the computer, play electronic games or play board games. The home also has a dining area where members of staff and young people enjoy a meal together. Young people are encouraged to take a pride in the quality of their living accommodation by helping to keep the home clean and tidy and by personalising their own rooms. There are numerous photographs on the walls that reflect the events and activities that young people have enjoyed with staff; for example, trips to the coast and theme parks. There is an excellent maintenance and repair programme for the building. Furniture and equipment that becomes damaged or broken is repaired or replaced quickly. The garden is well maintained and safe. The home is very clean and there are homely touches throughout.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people spoken to said they feel safe living at the home. Where particular risks

are identified, risk assessments are recorded to help the staff understand what action to take to minimise the identified risks. This in turn helps to develop young people's understanding of the reasons why adults are concerned about them. However, there are some inconsistencies in recording perceived risks and action to be taken by staff. For instance, in one case the risk areas recorded within a risk assessment were slightly different to those recorded at the front of the document. Young people say that they feel cared for and protected although, the anomalies within the document may cause confusion amongst staff. This could in turn mean that young people are not fully protected from harm.

The home has excellent safeguarding systems and procedures for staff to follow in the event of any allegation or suspicion of abuse. The manager and staff have received child protection training. Staff are able to demonstrate a very good knowledge and understanding of the safeguarding procedures to promote and protect young people's safety. As a result, young people are kept safe from potential abuse or exploitation.

There is good written guidance for staff to follow in the event of a young person going missing, and there is evidence that the frequency with which children and young people go missing is minimised. However, one incident where a young person did go missing was not recorded appropriately. The young person was spoken to by an independent person about their reasons for going missing but those reasons have not been recorded on the young person's file nor have they been reported to the staff team. Accurate recording of young people who go missing, and their reasons for going missing are essential if risk assessments are to be maintained accurately and the occasions when a young person may go missing is minimised. In addition, knowing the locations of where young people may go when they are missing is essential in helping to safeguard them and maintain their welfare.

Sanctions are rarely used. When they are used they are relevant and reflect the age and understanding of the young people. Any sanctions imposed are reviewed regularly for appropriateness and effectiveness. Behaviour management plans are used which contain details for staff to follow when managing young people's behaviour. It is very rare that physical restraint is used to manage behaviour at the home. Staff are fully trained in the appropriate and safe use of restraint and de-escalation techniques and this training is kept up-to-date. Record keeping is good and is regularly monitored by the home's manager. Regular monitoring of written records helps to identify patterns or trends that can be used to support young people further.

Regular fire safety checks, general checks and maintenance arrangements ensure the home is physically safe and is kept safe. All staff have received up-to-date fire safety training to enable them to minimise the risks to young people in the event of a fire at the home.

All staff are appropriately recruited and undergo suitable Criminal Records Bureau checks to ensure that they are suitable to work with young people. This helps to protect young people from potential abuse or exploitation.

Leadership and management

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

The home has a Statement of Purpose which is made available to all relevant parties, including young people, to inform them about how care is provided at the home. The Statement of Purpose has recently been reviewed and updated to incorporate new technology via dynamic quick response codes to child protection experts and independent agencies such as Ofsted. The use of such codes enables young people and those responsible for their care to contact independent agencies or find important information and help quickly. This in turn helps to keep them safe and well informed.

The staff team is committed, dedicated and experienced and has the skills and competencies necessary to meet the complex needs of the young people living at the home. One staff member said, 'one of the best things about the home is that we have a solid and experienced staff team which helps us to provide a consistency of care to the young people.' Management support and supervision are described as, 'really good' and, 'relevant' by staff, who clearly value the contributions of the manager and senior staff within the authority.

The young people are receiving care from staff that are appropriately trained to meet their needs. All staff receive training in a wide variety of safety and childcare subjects. An on-going programme of regular refresher training is provided to enhance the staff team's competency and to ensure they retain the skills necessary to meet the needs of the young people.

The home's manager has systems in place to monitor practice and report and evaluate the administration systems of the home. This is supported by regular unannounced visits from a person independent of the home to help monitor and improve the quality of care. Service development plans are also in place. The home's development plan is understood by the staff team and is reviewed at frequent intervals. This means that staff know what the strengths and weaknesses of the home are and how the care provided, or the running of the home can be improved.

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.