

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Dorrit Andrews
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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 provides long term residential care for up to six young people who have emotional and behavioural difficulties. The home is owned and operated by the local Children's Services Department.

Overall effectiveness

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

Young people are provided with good individualised care. They benefit from staff who have a clear knowledge and understanding of their needs and are highly committed to supporting them to develop and progress in all aspects of their lives. The views of young people are valued and regularly sought in relation to their day-to-day care and future planning. Robust care practices and strong partnerships with other key agencies promote and safeguard the welfare of young people both in and outside of the home.

Young people say they feel safe and well cared for. They report that staff 'spend time' with them, make them 'feel welcome' and 'really care'. Social workers praise the 'proactive work' of staff in helping to build positive relationships between young people and their social workers, particularly when the allocated case holder has changed. Communication is reported to be 'good' between the staff and social work teams, and the home is seen as providing a 'supportive environment' to young people by staff who 'know them very well'.

There is good management of the home. The management team understand the strengths and areas of further development for the home. Areas identified for improvement include the presentation of some aspects of information provided by the home, discussions with social workers about young people's occasional restricted access to areas of the home, and the redecoration of the landing and bedroom corridors.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure the practice of occasionally restricting access to areas of the home to promote young people's welfare is only used where agreed with the responsible authority and if appropriate, the parents (NMS 10.4)

- provide a comfortable and homely environment with regards to redecoration of the landing and bedroom corridors (NMS 10.3)
- ensure all aspects of the Children's and Young People's Guide are written in age appropriate language with particular regard to securing access to an independent advocate and the meaning of restorative justice (NMS 13.5)
- ensure Schedule 6 monitoring reports fully reflect the action taken to address any issues raised (NMS 21.2)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people benefit greatly from the individual care and support they receive. One-to-one work is undertaken by staff to help young people talk about, understand and come to terms with their current circumstances. Daily opportunities are also taken by staff to openly discuss matters within the home and their impact on individuals. Young people report that whilst it is sometimes difficult living with other people, staff support them to talk through any disagreements and to get along better. Some individuals have used the skills learnt to help cope with school and family issues thereby developing their emotional resilience.

Young people's physical and emotional health is strongly promoted. They are supported to understand the importance of a healthy lifestyle and are provided with healthy meals and opportunities to participate in a range of activities. Young people report that staff encourage them to attend regular health checks and are open to discussing a range of well-being topics with them. Effective links with the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services support the home's work with individual young people and contribute greatly to their emotional well-being and progress.

The value of education is positively promoted and each young person is actively supported to attend their education provision. Emphasis is placed on enabling individuals to develop their organisational and coping skills thereby raising their confidence and supporting their progress. Individual effort and achievement are recognised and rewarded, and contribute to a young person's development of a positive self image.

Young people are encouraged to make positive contributions to the home and the wider community to promote their sense of belonging and the nurturing of positive relationships. Residents' meetings discuss a wide range of topics including ecological matters, tolerance and consideration for others including the home's neighbours. Young people regularly contribute ideas and suggestions in relation to the running of the home including menus, activities and décor. A recent request by young people for a wider range of books to be provided has prompted a request for the mobile library service to visit the home. Valuing and responding to the views of young people in this way empowers them and increases their confidence and self-worth.

Young people are effectively supported to maintain constructive contact with their

families, friends and significant others in their lives. Young people confirm that contact arrangements are discussed and agreed in consultation with staff and social workers and that their friends and family members can visit. Young people benefit from the practical and emotional support provided by staff both in preparing for and after contact visits. They also know that they can contact staff by telephone for support during contact if needed. These practices support the maintenance of individual placements to best effect.

The daily routine of the home provides opportunities for young people to acquire practical skills to support their self-care and develop their independence. Opportunities include preparing drinks and snacks, cooking, helping to clear away after meals and getting organised for school. The development of other life skills such as using public transport to visit family and friends are nurtured and paced according to each individual and the level of support required. This practice enables young people to develop and confidently maintain their skills within an emotionally supportive environment.

Quality of care

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

Staff have encountered some challenging and turbulent periods since the last inspection. A number of long term placements simultaneously reached their natural conclusion resulting in an almost entirely new group of residents being introduced to the home during the past six months. Staff have clearly worked hard to establish positive relationships with young people and provide clear and consistent expectations to support the development of appropriate behaviour. Young people report they are made to feel welcome, are listened to and are able to talk to a range of staff. They appreciate staff spending time with them and supporting their involvement in activities in and outside of the home, particularly in relation to football and wall climbing.

Young people are fully involved in discussions about their care and planning for their future. Equality and diversity matters are positively explored and addressed in consultation with individuals. Their views and wishes are actively sought and they are encouraged and supported to attend placement meetings and reviews. Parents, family members and significant others are also consulted and their views listened to. Some young people consider the home's regular dialogue with their family to be helpful as it includes 'good stuff as well'. Opportunities are regularly provided for the raising of individual issues or ideas about the running of the home. Young people know how to make a complaint and consider any issues they raise are taken seriously.

Each young person is registered with a local general practitioner and good links are established with other local health professionals. Referrals are made to specialist services where a particular need is identified and young people benefit greatly from the home's strong links with the local Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services. Good records are maintained of health checks and treatment, including when a

young person has refused to attend. Records of accidents and medication are well kept and regularly monitored. First aid training is provided to staff and refresher courses accessed as necessary. Young people's participation in activities and interests outside of the home is encouraged to support their emotional and physical well-being.

Education is actively promoted and supported. Staff are proactive in their communication with education professionals and advocate strongly on behalf of young people to secure appropriate provision for them. Attendance is consistently promoted, staff attend school related events and support home learning. Young people have access to a home computer and good access to a local library. A range of books is available within the home and is soon to be expanded by utilising the local mobile library service to provide a wider choice.

The home's location promotes good access to a range of local amenities, activities and transport links. Accommodation is clean, tidy and generally well maintained. Re-decoration has taken place of ground floor areas to provide a welcoming and homely environment. However, the landing and bedroom corridor areas are showing signs of wear and tear. Each young person has their own bedroom which they are encouraged to personalise and keep clean with the support of staff where necessary. Private bath, shower and toilet facilities are available to young people and are sufficient in number to meet their needs. Separate facilities are provided for staff and visitors. The rear garden offers seating and grassed areas for activities such as barbecues and football. An outside recreation room provides all year round facilities for playing pool, listening to music and other activities. Recently there have been occasions when access to some facilities and areas of the home has been restricted in order to promote the welfare of young people. Such measures have not always been discussed with placing social workers. Steps are being taken to include details of agreed restrictions in individual management plans and a practice statement is being prepared for the home's revised Statement of Purpose to ensure all interested parties are informed.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people report they are well cared for and feel safe. Highly effective safeguarding systems, comprehensive risk assessments and detailed management plans actively promote and safeguard the welfare of young people living at the home. Staff fully understand their role and responsibilities in relation to safeguarding matters and have established highly effective working partnerships with other agencies and organisations to support individual work with young people. Risk taking behaviour is discussed with young people and strategies put in place to address and manage identified risks. For example, individual work is undertaken to target specific vulnerabilities and support young people in taking controlled risks, appropriate to their age, to aid their development. This may include a young person being accompanied by staff when out in the city or staff insisting a young person stays in

regular telephone contact with the home when out with friends. Young people who go missing from the home are protected in accordance with written procedures and responded to positively on their return. Good records are maintained of when incidents have occurred and are regularly monitored.

Interactions between staff and young people are observed to be warm, positive and supportive. Young people state they enjoy positive relations with staff and generally 'get on' with other young people living at the home. Staff are said to 'sort things out' when there are disagreements and bring together those involved to resolve issues and promote positive interactions. Bullying is not tolerated and is not reported as an issue in the home. Young people appreciate the presence and availability of staff and consider these factors contribute to their feeling safe. Particular comments refer to the home as 'better than my previous placement', 'it is more homely and staff spend time with you'. Staff receive regular behaviour management training including the use of restraint, de-escalation techniques and restorative approaches. There has been no use of physical intervention since the last inspection. Sanctions used are proportionate, records are regularly monitored and include young people's views.

Comprehensive risk assessments are carried out in relation to the premises, grounds and activities. An established system of review ensures they are kept up to date thereby supporting the maintenance of a safe environment for young people, staff and visitors. Servicing records evidence regular cycles of maintenance by external contractors, regular checks are conducted of fire safety equipment and young people are familiar with fire evacuation procedures.

There has been no new staff recruited since the last inspection. Visitors are monitored and appropriate records maintained to support the safety of young people living at the home.

Leadership and management

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

The home operates to the aims and objectives set out in its Statement of Purpose. A separate guide is provided to young people and they consider this document to be helpful. Information in the young person's guide is presented well overall and young people spoken with demonstrate a good understanding of its contents. However, information relating to securing the services of an independent advocate and the use of restorative approaches in the home are not written in age appropriate language for young people.

Management of the home is good and appropriate action has been taken to address the requirement from the previous inspection. Young people are looked after by skilled and competent staff who are sufficient in number, experience and training to meet their needs. A rolling programme of mandatory and refresher training is provided to ensure care practices are kept up to date. Regular formal supervision sessions are provided for all staff, including housekeeping and administrative staff, to guide and support them in their work. A staffing policy is in place and staff confirm

that staffing ratios are increased in response to the specific needs of young people and the home. Young people are made aware of who is on duty, cover arrangements are in place for when staff or management are absent and back up support is always available through the home's on-call system. A restructuring programme has taken place within the organisation since the last inspection and has resulted in the recent transfer of an assistant team manager to the home. This appointment now brings the management team within the home up to full complement.

Established systems are in place to monitor the care of young people and the performance of the home. The manager conducts an annual review of the service highlighting developments for the forthcoming year and prepares a report for senior management. Regulation 33 visitor reports are completed monthly as required and include consultation with young people and parents/carers where appropriate. Areas for action are identified, acted upon and contribute to strengthening good practice and the further development of the home. Monthly, internal monitoring reports are also compiled. These are mostly good or very good and provide an overview of the home. However, some reports do not fully reflect the action taken to address issues raised through monitoring. Young people's views are regularly sought about their care, progress and the day-to-day life of the home. Their views are valued and contribute to the home's development. The home also takes community relations seriously and works hard to maintain positive relationships with neighbours.

Records are well maintained overall and securely stored. Case files record young people's needs, development and progress and reflect their individuality and background. Significant events are promptly notified to appropriate authorities to promote the safeguarding of young people. Effective follow up action is taken by the home where necessary and includes some very good examples of securing additional support and guidance to address young people's risk taking behaviour.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.