

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Stella Lovie / Simon Morley
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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 care and support for four young people of either sex with emotional and behavioural difficulties. The home is managed by the local authority.

Overall effectiveness

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

Young people benefit from personalised, well planned care that takes account of the individual needs of each person. Positive outcomes are achieved for most of the young people. Written information demonstrating the good level of care is not always recorded in a way which will be helpful to young people when they access their files.

Young people are successfully engaging in hobbies and activities in the wider community. Most of the young people have achieved good school attendance and are enjoying positive recognition of achievements in their schools. However, this is not the case for some of the young people whose school attendance has deteriorated since coming to live in the home. Staff are working hard to turn this situation around.

Staff have a high commitment to ensuring the safety of all of the young people, and are well trained. This helps them to provide a good quality of safe care. The home does not, however, have its own safeguarding policy with a detailed focus on the roles and responsibilities for residential staff in respect of safeguarding. While the home can demonstrate good practice for young people who go missing, it does not keep sufficiently detailed written records to help identify trends and patterns. Although these are shortfalls, they do not have a significantly adverse impact on the home's ability to keep young people safe.

The young people are very enthusiastic and complimentary about the quality of care in the home. This is reflected in the warm nurturing relationships between staff and the young people, and the very minimal recourse to sanctions and restraint. However, although young people comment that the sanctions are proportional, financial sanctions should not be imposed for anything other than reparation.

Staff provide effective support to the young people in relation to their individual needs. There is a strong commitment to the promotion of equality and diversity threaded through policies, documents, files and records. This is reflected in the respectful relationships between staff and young people.

Leaders and managers make good use of a range of systems to monitor the quality of care. However, these systems do not include sufficient consultation with young people, their parents and stakeholders. Nevertheless, realistic and child-centred

development plans are in place that are monitored and reviewed. The drive for continuing improvement is enthusiastically shared by the whole staff team.

Areas for improvement

Statutory 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
16 (2001)	ensure that the registered person shall prepare and implement written policy which is intended to safeguard children accommodated in the children's home from abuse or neglect, and sets out the procedure to be followed in the event of any allegation of abuse or neglect (Regulation 16 (1))	23/02/2012
17 (2001)	ensure that the following shall not be used as a disciplinary measure on children accommodated in a children's home-the imposition of any financial penalty, other than a requirement for the payment of a reasonable sum (which may be by instalments) by way of reparation (Regulation 17 (2) (g))	23/02/2012
33 (2001)	ensure that the person carrying out the visit shall interview, with their consent and in private, such of the children accommodated there, their parents and relatives as appears necessary in order to form an opinion of the standard of care provided in the home (Regulation 33 (4) (a))	23/02/2012
34 (2001)	ensure that the registered person shall establish and maintain a system that shall provide for consultation with children accommodated in the home, their parents and placing authorities. (Regulation 34 (3))	23/02/2012

Recommendations

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

- ensure that written records kept by the home when a child goes missing detail the circumstances of the child's return and any action taken in light of those reasons (NMS 5.10)
- ensure that children are supported to attend school, college or alternative provision regularly (NMS 8.3)
- ensure that information is recorded in a way which will be helpful to the child when they access their files now or in the future. (NMS 22.5)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people are making good progress in developing a positive self view and emotional resilience. For example, one young person commented that this home is the best place that they have lived in. Unfortunately, not all of the young people have been able to benefit from the support on offer. The Registered Manager and staff are aware that for these young people they need to find alternative strategies of effective engagement.

Young people's involvement in their care planning and in making choices about their lives is good. This helps develop a sense of empowerment and improved self-esteem.

Most of the young people have good attendance at school and are making positive educational progress. For example, young people have very complimentary autumn term school reports. However, school attendance for some of the young people has deteriorated since they came to live in the home, and they are spending most of the day in bed. This is putting them at risk of poor emotional and psychological health, and limited future life options. While the Registered Manager and staff are making robust efforts to turn this situation around, they have not been successful to date.

All of the young people enjoy positive engagement with the wider community. For example, some young people attend cadets and have been involved in recent Remembrance Sunday events. Many of the young people have friends locally that they see on a regular basis and occasionally have overnight stays with them. Some young people are active in the community in relation to their cultural and religious beliefs. This helps the young people build up self-confidence and promotes personal identity.

As the young people get older, they are supported to complete a life skills programme. For example, some young people have been assisted with doing their shopping in specialist supermarkets which cater to their cultural needs, and have learnt to cook culturally appropriate meals. All of the young people are successfully encouraged to do their own laundry and help with the cooking. This helps them to understand how to manage the practicalities of a home and their personal care.

The home is well kept and homely. There is an ongoing programme of maintenance and any damage is quickly repaired. This encourages the young people to show respect towards their environment. The young people's bedrooms are decorated according to individual choice. This particularly helps contribute towards the young people's self-esteem and personal identity. Young people have helped to create some raised beds in the garden to grow vegetables which are then harvested for cooking. This contributes towards awareness about healthy eating.

Quality of care

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

The young people enjoy warm relationships with staff, and mostly with each other. Young people thrive on the individual, caring support staff give. The home environment is calm and relaxed and this helps the young people feel nurtured and secure. One young person commented that the home 'can do nothing better – everything is great'.

Young people's views have a significant influence in the running of the home. This helps them develop in maturity. It is clear that the young people have an active voice in the construction and delivery of their care. Care plans are up to date and reflect the individual diverse needs of the young people. This helps staff ensure that plans are followed in a sensitive, personalised way.

The young people have access to a wide range of specialist services and support in line with their personal physical, emotional and psychological needs. This effectively ensures that young people benefit from the individual health care that they need.

The young people know how to make a complaint. An independent Children's Rights Officer visits the young people on a monthly basis and often stays for a meal with them and to have informal discussions. This helps the young people to feel empowered and confident in the home. Some of the young people are considering involvement with the Children in Care council with the assistance of the Children's Rights Officer. This will promote skills of communication and negotiation which will benefit all aspects of their future lives.

Staff use a wide range of incentive schemes to motivate the young people and these are effective in most cases. For example, young people have improved their school attendance as a consequence of a particular incentive. Staff actively promote the young people's education by attending parent's evenings, encouraging homework and through good liaison with schools. Most of the young people attend school well and enjoy significant achievements. This helps increase self-esteem and positive engagement with learning.

Staff work hard to address equality and diversity issues in both daily living and care planning. For example, young people's cultural needs in relation to food and food preparation are met in a sensitive way. The staff also raise awareness about different cultures through poster displays. This promotes tolerance and respect between the young people and in their engagement with the wider community.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people report that they feel safe in the home and that they would talk to staff if they ever feel the need to do so. There is a strong and proactive response to any incidence of bullying. The anti-bullying message is systemically promoted through individual young people's contracts, young people's meetings, posters that raise

awareness and individual key worker sessions. As a consequence, bullying is kept to the minimum and the young people generally get on well with each other.

Young people benefit from care planning and risk management strategies that are well organised to meet the individual needs of each person. Risk assessments are regularly updated as needed. As a consequence, staff are knowledgeable about potential risks to each young person. This is a competent level of care practice that effectively keeps young people safe.

Staff have a good level of training in child protection and appropriately report any concerns they have about a young person's welfare in line with the local authority's safeguarding policy. As a consequence, young people are consistently safeguarded. However, the home does not have its own safeguarding policy with a focus on practice and guidance for residential staff.

There are clear practices and arrangements to support appropriate action when young people go missing. For example, staff will try to contact the young person on their mobile phone and will search likely places in the local area where the young person may have gone. Staff talk with the young person on their return and take action to protect the young person as required. This ensures effective safeguarding by helping the young people gain a better understanding about the dangers and risks of going missing. However, the written records about young people who go missing are insufficiently clear about the circumstances of the young person's return and any action taken in light of the reasons given by the young person for going missing. This has some impact on the identification of trends and patterns. Although this is a shortfall in record keeping, the overall care practice in this area is of a good quality and helps keep young people safe.

Positive behaviour is successfully promoted within a caring culture that all staff and young people understand. Staff manage conflict well using effective de-escalation techniques. This means that physical restraint is very rarely required. This helps young people develop the skills needed to mature into well rounded confident adults. Sanctions and rewards for behaviour are clear, reasonable and fair. Young people comment in the records that sanctions have been proportional. This is an improvement in practice recommended at the last inspection. However, there is an inappropriate use of financial penalties as consequences for some behaviour.

Leadership and management

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

The leadership and management of this home is strong and well organised. This establishes a good role model for the staff and the young people. There is effective quality assurance around systems and care practice. This ensures that staff are able to consistently follow the home's policies and procedures. Young people therefore benefit from a high quality of service. This is underpinned by regular monitoring by an independent professional. Trends and issues of concern are thus identified so that all those running and working in the home can continually improve the quality of

care they are providing. Unfortunately, young people, relatives and stakeholders have not been adequately consulted in these processes.

The development of the service is every member of staff's business in this home. For example, in the written development plan named staff have responsibility for leading on specific practice improvements. This promotes a coherent strong staff team that strives to provide the best quality of service for the young people in their care.

Staff receive regular supervision of a good quality within a context of annual performance development plans. This ensures that staff are up to date with changes in legislation and practice which helps them to fulfil their roles. Staff's individual training needs are identified and met, and staff have received training specially related to the diverse needs of the young people. This helps staff to support the young people effectively.

The home employs a sufficient number of staff within flexible rotas that enable young people to participate in evening community activities.

While records are clear, up to date and stored securely, the young person's story contained within them is somewhat fragmented over a range of different files and logs. This does not help young people get a good understanding of their life in the home should they want to access their files.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.