

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Jacqueline Malcolm
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The children's home is run by a local authority. It is registered to accommodate up to four young people of either gender who have experienced behavioural and emotional difficulties.

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**.

Young people are settled in a good home environment and they have a positive view about their home life. The stable, experienced staff team provide a good level of care, support and guidance to young people. They value young people's individuality, nurture their strengths and act as good mentors. This enables young people to feel cared about and they make good progress in most parts of their lives. In particular, education, building their confidence and improving relationships with parents and families. The home is highly regarded by parents and professionals, all of whom share the same interest in improving outcomes for young people. A parent says: 'the staff are very welcoming and my (name) is happy there. I am always made to feel welcome and listened to'. A placing social worker says: 'staff are excellent'.

Young people confirm they feel safe. They feel consulted about their care and their views are listened to and appropriately acted on. Young people's needs arising from their personal identity and cultural heritage is actively promoted and is well integrated into daily living. The staff team support young people through a range of major challenges, such as discouraging them from using drugs. Young people are engaged in direct work with partner agencies to help to minimise the associated risks, but progress in this area is slow.

The Registered Manager has a strong commitment to improving young people's future prospects. Staff feel well trained and supported to carry out their responsibilities with confidence. This ensures that they remain motivated to care for young people in order to improve their life chances.

As a result of this inspection requirements and recommendations have been raised to ensure that: Ofsted receives all Regulation 33 reports and notification of significant events; that adequate fire precautions are taken; that only the homes agreed restraint techniques are used; restraint records fully comply with the regulations; and issues of concern which are discussed in staff meetings about young people are quickly acted on.

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
30 (2001)	ensure that if any of the events listed in column 1 of the table in Schedule 5 takes place, the registered person shall without delay notify the persons indicated in respect of the event in column 2 of the table (Regulation 30(1))	31/10/2013
32 (2001)	ensure that the registered person after consultation with the fire and rescue authority about the use of door wedges takes adequate precautions against the risk of fire (Regulation 32(1)(a))	31/10/2013
33 (2001)	ensure that the registered person supplies to the HMCI a copy of the report on the conduct of the home. (Regulation 33 (5)(a))	31/10/2013

Recommendations

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

- ensure that where children's homes use restraint that only agreed physical restraint techniques are used. (NMS 3.15)
- ensure the registered person takes action to address any issues of concern that they identify or which is raised with them. (NMS 21.9)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people enjoy living in this supportive and nurturing home. Overall, they all make good progress from their starting points in most aspects of their welfare and development. Young people say that they are cared for well and feel that they are treated with respect. This improves their self-esteem, which helps them to sustain

positive attachment with the adults who care for and about them. One young person who has moved from the home, but remains in regular contact says, 'they helped me to feel good about myself'.

Young people understand the importance of living a healthy lifestyle. For example, they understand the need to eat healthy and balanced meals, which reduces their chances of obesity and illness, such as diabetes and heart disease. Some young people are engaged in sporting activities, which keep them fit. They are engaged with primary health care and specialised services. This helps young people to develop and improve their emotional resilience and psychological well-being over time. Young people attend counselling sessions with drug and alcohol advisors. This helps them to understand the likely impact on their health of smoking harmful substances. However, young people are choosing not to cease this behaviour, which means that progress in this area is slow.

Young people benefit from regular family contact. This strengthens their relationships and gives young people a positive sense of belonging and personal identity. Parents and relatives continue to have an active role in decisions about their children and maintain their links with them. For example, young people visit their family homes and their families visit them. Young people have sufficient opportunities to develop their own friendships in the community. This ensures their social inclusion and means that they do not rely on the company of staff all of the time.

Young people have made significant progress from their starting points in their educational attendance and achievements. For example, some young people who have a history of non-school attendance demonstrate a significant improvement and the quality of their work shows that they have the ability to achieve good examination grades. This improves their confidence in their abilities and they respond well to praise. Young people who have left school with good examination results are studying in college towards qualifications that will enhance their future job prospects.

Young people have good independence skills or are making good progress to develop the relevant skills that will be helpful to them when they reach adulthood. Young people know how to budget, shop for food, clothing and essential items, prepare and cook meals. They are also independent in the community. For example, travelling to and from educational facilities and socialising with family and friends. One young person says, 'yes, they prepare you for the rest of your life doing day to day tasks'.

Quality of care

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

Young people say that the home is a good place to live. They receive good care from an experienced and confident staff team who place their needs at the centre of their practice. This makes young people feel valued and cared about. Young people have positive and trusting relationships with staff and they generally relate well with each other. This promotes trust and mutual respect and young people feel that they can

talk to staff about a range of issues without feeling judged. One young person says, 'my children's home is very diverse and offers lots of support towards the young people that live in it. I like where I live because the staff are nice and always want to encourage the young children to do things and not just sit around'.

Staff act as positive role models and their messages to young people help them to take responsibility for their behaviour. This is mainly in relation to some young people's anti-social behaviour in the community, in particular substance misuse. Staff say, 'we just keep pecking their heads about it and talk about the health benefits'. The home works effectively with other agencies to ensure that young people who present with risky behaviours attend youth offending programmes to ensure they comply with legal orders. This helps to modify anti-social behaviours presented by some young people.

Young people are involved in the development of their personalised placement and pathway plans. This gives them control of their lives. Plans clearly show how young people's needs arising from their personal identity is promoted and positively addressed on a daily basis. For example, the provision of cultural meals and promoting young people's religion support young people to feel proud of their heritage. Young people are involved in the development of their plans. One young person says, 'my placement plan is very helpful and encouraging because it helps you become a young adult and do things that will help you when you live on your own'. The plans are regularly reviewed to ensure that young people's needs continue to be met by the home. Young people have positive relationships with their keyworkers and they are responsible for reviewing the plans at regular intervals. One young person says, '(name) is my key worker and she is the best i've had yet'. Staff work closely with social workers and other professionals to ensure that they are fully informed about young people's progress. One social worker says, 'the home lets me know about any incidents'.

Young people's wishes and feelings are listened to and acted on as appropriate. This enables them to have a positive influence in the running of the home and their future plans. Young people know how to make a complaint if they are unhappy with any aspect of their care or treatment. There have been no complaints at this home for a significant length of time.

Young people benefit from proactive multi-agency support that is driven by the home's contacts with other agencies and professionals. This specifically includes the strong relationships that are developed with schools and colleges, which enables regular communication about the young people's progress and behaviour. This ensures a consistent approach to young people's care. Young people are supported to access a range of health services that meet their complex and diverse needs. This gives them an improved insight into their physical, emotional and psychological health. A parent said, 'staff are excellent, my child has had all her health check-ups including eye test, full check-up off a doctor and nurse'.

Young people have access to a range of activities and opportunities that are offered to them on a weekly basis. Young people who show a passion for sports are

supported to participate. Most young people prefer to socialise with their friends in the community. Staff continue to learn about young people's interest and talents to balance their social lives with other interesting and meaningful activities.

Young people live in a pleasant, family home environment that is safe, warm, welcoming and well designed. Improvements have been made to the home, such as plastering some of the walls in rooms and a new front door has been fitted. These improvements enhance the overall appearance of the home. There is minimal damage around the home, which demonstrates that young people value their space. The home is located close to good transport routes and local facilities, which enables young people to positively integrate into community life.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people say they feel safe and well cared for in the home and they make comments, such as, 'yeah, I feel safe'. Social workers and parents are confident that young people are safe at the home. Young people confirm that they can talk to any member of staff if they have any worries. Staff are trained in safeguarding children and they receive regular refresher training. Staff feel confident in dealing with any child protection concern or allegations and they understand the whistleblowing process and the role of the local authority designated officer (LADO). This protects young people's safety and welfare.

Young people benefit from staff who understand their vulnerabilities which helps ensure their safety. For example, staff talk to young people about keeping safe when they are away from the home, which reinforces the safety message. Young people do not identify bullying as a current issue. However, staff are conscious of the likelihood of bullying and quickly deal with any incidents that have occurred.

Young people demonstrate a significant reduction in incidents of going missing from care. This reduces the risks associated with anti-social behaviour, abuse and sexual exploitation. Individual protocols in place ensure that appropriate action is taken in the event of a young person failing to return home when expected. Staff take proactive measures, such as contacting young people on their mobile phones and if necessary, they will seek to locate them at known contacts. These measures keep young people safe and well.

Good communication with parents and professionals is one of the home's major strengths. A social worker said, 'mum is on board with everything and the home has a multi-disciplinary approach to care'. As a result, young people feel well cared for and protected.

Positive behaviour is actively promoted by good role modelling from staff, coupled with their nurturing and honest relationships with the young people. Behaviour management and risk assessments support young people's individual needs. This

helps young people to regulate their moods. Staff have good de-escalation skills, which minimises the need to restrain or impose a lot of sanctions. A staff member commented that they have not had to restrain a young person: 'as my de-escalation skills are amazing. Managers always offer support if you have not had the best shift, we have debriefs so i believe the same would apply after a restraint'. Young people say that they have not been restrained. One young person says, 'iv'e never seen any restraining going on in my children's home because the situation has never occurred to be that bad'. However, at least one out of two recorded restraints was not the agreed technique used by the home. The date of the restraint is not recorded, which provides a lack of clarity. Although the young person was not harmed during the intervention, an opportunity to address the issue has been missed.

Young people enjoy a physically safe and secure environment. This is ensured through the regular checking of gas and electrical equipment. Checks on fire prevention equipment are completed and young people know how to safely evacuate the home in the case of an emergency. However a fire door has been wedged open in the home, which is in contravention with the home's fire risk assessment. In the event of a fire, this has the potential to impact on the safety of young people and staff in the building.

The home has a very stable staff team and there have been no new staff employed since the last inspection. Safe recruitment systems ensure that staff are carefully selected and vetted before starting work in the home. Visitors are checked and appropriately monitored. This helps to prevent unsuitable people from having access to vulnerable young people.

Leadership and management

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

A Statement of Purpose gives information about the services that young people can expect to receive.

The home is managed by a Registered Manager who is experienced, qualified and well established at the home. He is suitably deputised and supported by a motivated and skilled staff team. The team understand the needs of young people and all have high expectations of them. This contributes to their good outcomes and quality of care.

The manager has good leadership qualities and he is committed to the young people in his care. He is aware of most of the homes strengths and weaknesses and has a development plan in place. Internal monitoring is regularly completed, but some practice shortfalls have not been identified so that they can be resolved in a timely fashion. For example, shortfalls in restraint records have not been addressed and the fire risk assessment has not been adhered to with respect to fire doors. Information recorded in the team meeting minutes about a young person's risky behaviour has not been acted on with sufficient speed. This delay means that areas of concern have not been prioritised so that young people receive prompt targeted support.

External monitoring visits regularly contribute to the improvement agenda and include the views of young people, staff and parents on care standards in the home. However, a number of the monitoring reports have not been received by Ofsted. This does not keep the regulator informed on a regular basis about the conduct of the home and the young people's progress.

The manager notifies the local authority, parents and takes appropriate action when significant events occur. However, there has been at least one occasion when a notification was not received by Ofsted. This impedes the regulator from effectively carrying out its safeguarding responsibilities to ensure young people's protection.

Young people are cared for by a sufficient number of experienced and suitably qualified staff. This enables staff to care for young people with diverse needs and challenges. A low staff turnover helps staff to provide consistent care to the young people. The manager provides staff with regular supervision and access to mandatory and specific training which develops the staff team's knowledge and skills. Staff feel supported and valued. They say, 'I feel that I am part of a dedicated staff team who continually strive to improve services' and 'i am well supported by my manager to complete my job to the best of my ability'.

Young people's records are well maintained and easy to follow and stored securely. This provides young people with a clear account of their progress and development.

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.