

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Judith Longden
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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 children's home is operated by the local authority and provides care and accommodation for up to five young people aged from 15 years to 18 years old. The home supports young people to learn the skills required and develop the emotional resilience needed for transition to independent living and adult life. The home is on a large estate with good transport links into the town and to local leisure facilities. Five young people are currently living at the home and four took part in this unannounced full inspection.

Overall effectiveness

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

The home provides personalised and well planned care based on the individual and diverse needs of the young people. The ethos of the home is to support young people into independent living and transition to adulthood. Young people benefit from a good quality of care provided by a competent staff team and have good relationships with staff and other young people. Positive behaviour is encouraged and young people feel supported and feel safe at the home. Young people make good progress in achieving a healthy lifestyle, develop confidence and self-esteem, build emotional resilience and learn life-skills while at the home. Young people are fully involved in their care and in the running of the home.

There are improvements to be made in respect of clarifying information in the new Statement of Purpose and children's guide to ensure the home complies with standards and regulations. In addition staff supervision notes require further information and the registered provider is required to send reports on a regular basis. As a result of this inspection two requirements and two recommendations are made.

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
17 (2001)	ensure the imposition of a financial penalty is not used as a disciplinary measure, in respect of delaying pocket money	05/08/2011

	(regulation 17. (2) (g))	
33 (2001)	supply a copy of the report required to be made under paragraph (4)(c) to the HMCI. (Regulation 33. (5)(a))	05/08/2011

Recommendations

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

- ensure the Children's Guide has the correct contact details for Ofsted (NMS 13.5)
- ensure supervision records detail the time and date and length of each supervision held for each member of staff. (NMS 19.5)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

The home has a key focus to help young people develop emotional resilience and learn the life skills needed in the transition to independent living and adult life. They are supported to understand their cultural background and the reasons they are in care. Young people are encouraged to participate in all aspects of their care and plans for the future. This support helps to promote self-esteem and confidence in the young people and helps them to develop their emotional resilience. Young people undertake tasks around the home such as cleaning and laundry. They develop skills in budgeting, menu planning, shopping and cooking and prepare all their own meals. They benefit from a healthy diet of well balanced meals and the availability of healthy snacks.

Young people understand the importance of a healthy lifestyle and are encouraged to take responsibility for their own health. They are supported in this by staff and a variety of health professionals, including mental health workers, who provide emotional and psychological support. Personal hygiene is discussed and promoted and a variety of sport and leisure pursuits are encouraged to further promote healthy lifestyles.

Young people develop confidence and learn new skills through taking part in a variety of activities within the home and those provided by the local community. For example, young people use the boxing club, gym classes and have involvement in the local church. Young people benefit from appropriate contact with family and friends. Staff encourage friendships with peers and within the community and support young people in making these arrangements to ensure they are safe.

Young people are involved in a range of educational programmes and activities such as apprenticeships and work placements, college courses and school. They are encouraged and supported in their education and work placement opportunities to promote their future economic well-being. Attendance at education and work placements is good and young people are achieving good outcomes in their education.

Young people are given photos and mementos of their time at the home to contribute to their life story. There are good relationships with the leaving-care team. Staff support young people to contribute to their pathway plans for when they leave care. Staff continue to visit and support young people for several months after they have left the home. As a result young people are supported in the transition to adulthood and independent living.

Quality of care

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

Young people play an active role in their care and in the running of the home. They participate in residents' meetings and are supported in this by interpreters, if required. This enables young people to express their views and have their opinions heard and they gain skills in communicating their wishes and concerns. Young people participate in their care planning, reviews and plans for leaving care. Staff support and encourage young people to share their views about their time in care and their plans for the future. Placement plans are clear and detailed about the day-to-day care of the young person and staff implement these in practice, thus ensuring young people are cared for in line with their placement plans.

There have been no complaints since the last inspection and young people say there is no need to complain about anything. They are however aware of how to complain and of the support available if they wish to make a complaint.

Young people enjoy positive relationships with each other and with staff. The home has an approach to care that provides young people with the skills necessary to develop self-management and take responsibility for their choices and actions. Relationships based on mutual respect and inclusion support this approach and one young person commented that the good thing in the home is 'getting treated right'.

Young people say that bullying is not an issue in the home. They are aware of what to do should bullying occur. Some young people contributed to the revised bullying policy and procedures.

Staff support young people to engage with a variety of health professionals and ensure they attend appointments enabling them to access services to meet their complex health needs. This includes the use of interpreters for young people who are asylum seekers and have limited English. There is very good support from professionals from the mental health team who specialise in post traumatic stress disorders. These professionals engage with young asylum seekers to help them understand their traumatic life experiences. Good health care plans are implemented by staff. These promote the physical, emotional and psychological health of the young people. Staff are trained in safe handling and administration of medicines and a number of staff have first aid qualifications.

Good working relationships between staff at the home, education providers, Connexions and work placement providers exist to promote and support young people in their education. Staff encourage young people to take part in extra curricular activities, such as sports events, to promote further learning and skill development. The home has recently purchased a computer with internet access to support young people in their homework.

Young people live in a home that is furnished and decorated to a good standard and provides a warm and friendly environment. The home is well equipped to support young people in their independent living skills and provides adequate space for communal living and private time. The home is close to local amenities and leisure facilities and this provides a range of opportunities for young people. Staff encourage young people to engage in a variety of activities in the home and in the community.

This helps build young people's confidence and improve their social skills. Young people are supported to establish friendships with their peers and members of their community. This supports their understanding of their cultural background and personal identity.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

The home operates a positive behaviour management policy where the focus is on restorative practice and young people taking responsibility for their actions. Staff work closely with young people to establish sound professional relationships and an environment where young people are encouraged to talk freely and openly. This approach has meant the use of restraint is no longer required and the imposition of sanctions is minimal.

Young people are aware of how to protect themselves from harm and feel safe as a result of good safeguarding policies. The home has good procedures for reporting and recording of allegations or suspicions of harm. Staff are aware of what to do in the event of any concern and are confident to implement the procedures if required. Appropriate responses are made to allegations or suspicions of harm ensuring young people are protected and all those involved are supported effectively. Good risk assessments and crisis management plans are in place and young people are involved in managing and reducing their own risks.

The home has a good policy for dealing with young people who are absent without authority and staff are competent in implementing this policy. A comprehensive missing from care protocol has been developed with the police. This ensures the safety of vulnerable young people is a high priority and that young people who are absent are protected as far as possible.

Regular health and safety audits, fire equipment and maintenance checks and a comprehensive range of risk assessments ensure young people live in a physically safe environment. Young people are further protected from harm by a sound recruitment process and the monitoring of all visitors to the home.

Leadership and management

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

The home is currently being managed on a temporary basis by a manager from another home in the local authority. This manager has developed a number of initiatives and methods of working to improve the home and the standard of care it provides. Previous requirements and recommendations have been met. Safeguarding procedures, a missing person protocol and allegation reporting systems are now in place. The visitors' book is bound and monitored. Fire drills are held regularly and whenever new staff or young people come to the home.

The home has refined its aims and objectives to focus on preparing older young people for independent living and transition to adulthood. As a result it is developing a revised Statement of Purpose and children's guide to reflect the new role and ethos of the home as a transition home supporting young people to live independently.

Staff are fully aware of the aims and ethos of the home and are implementing the objectives of the home on a day to day basis. This ensures young people receive a good service. However, some of the information in the revised documents is inaccurate in relation to the contact details for Ofsted. This may confuse young people wishing to make a complaint. In addition the new children's guide states a financial sanction in respect of delaying pocket money may be imposed. This conflicts with the behaviour management policy in place in the home and as a result there is lack of clarity on sanctions.

The home has good policies and procedures for the admission of young people including emergency admissions. These ensure young people are made to feel welcome when arriving at the home. Placement plans are detailed and provide an understanding of the cultural and religious backgrounds and identity of the young people, their needs and how to address them. In addition the daily care plans detail what it is like for the young people living in the home on a day-to-day basis. Young people are encouraged to take an active role in all aspects of their care and in the plans for when they leave care. As a result young people feel involved and valued.

Young people receive a good standard of care from an experienced, well qualified staff team. Staff increase their knowledge through a variety of training opportunities to improve their competency. Staff receive regular supervision. The length of supervision is not recorded and aspects of recording are insufficient. As a result it is difficult to assess the extent to which supervision enhances and supports the work of the staff. Adequate staffing levels are maintained ensuring young people receive the level of care they require at all times.

The registered provider visits the home to consult with young people about the quality of care they receive and how effectively their needs are met. The reports of these visits are not regularly received as required and as a result there is inconsistency in the monitoring of the welfare of young people. However all significant events are notified as appropriate and action taken as required.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.