

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Stephen Graham
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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 local authority children's home offers short-break care and accommodation for up to six young people of either sex aged 12 years to 17 years. It is registered to care for young people whose main needs arise from emotional or behavioural difficulties.

Overall effectiveness

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

The outcomes for young people visiting the home are outstanding. They benefit from individual support which is very well planned and provided. They enjoy positive supportive relationships with staff. They receive outstanding help with their personal health care needs. They can practice their cooking skills and regularly contribute their ideas on menu planning. Young people also benefit from well planned support and outstanding encouragement from staff to attend their education. They participate positively in a broad range of leisure activities in the community. Young people discuss their care needs with staff very regularly. The building provides a homely and comfortable environment for young people to live in. However, some of the arrangements used to ensure the building remains safe are not always applied effectively.

Young people are looked after by a very experienced and stable staff team. They provide young people with outstanding support to help keep them safe. Sanctions are rarely needed at the home and young people benefit from a broad range of incentives to promote their positive behaviour. The staff team are well trained and supported. The home is well led and managed. However, the arrangements used to monitor the service on behalf of the registered provider are not always sufficiently thorough. Some monitoring reports have not been forwarded to Ofsted as requested. Some of the written material provided to young people, their parents and social workers does not contain all of the information required or recommended.

Areas for improvementStatutory 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
33 (2001)	ensure that the views of parents and relatives are gathered to help form an opinion of the standard of care provided in the	31/12/2011

	home.(Regulation 33 (4)(a))	
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Recommendations

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

- ensure that checks on fire safety equipment occur at the regularity required to help minimise any risks to young people living at the home (NMS 10.3)
- ensure that the Children's Guide to the service includes all of the information recommended (NMS 13.5)
- ensure that information contained within the Statement of Purpose for the home is presented accurately and clearly (NMS 13.1)
- provide Ofsted with a copy of each monitoring report completed by the manager. (NMS 21.2) (Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 5: Children's Homes 3.14)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people living at the home make exceptional progress in all areas of their life. They enjoy outstanding individual support. The staff team are committed to anti-discriminatory practice and are effective in providing support which meets the cultural needs of the young people using the service. They talk very regularly with staff about their care needs. The staff team liaise regularly with placing social workers and parents to further ensure that the outcomes agreed in the care plans of each young person are achieved. The support provided is closely monitored by the manager to further ensure that it remains effective. The key worker for each young person organises detailed care records. These are completed each day by the staff team as a whole. They demonstrate clearly the outstanding outcomes enjoyed by young people.

Young people participate fully in a range of activities within their local community and lead healthy and active lifestyles. They access the health services that they need, including any additional specialist advice where this is ever necessary. They are looked after by the staff team if they are ever unwell.

Young people make outstanding progress in developing their life skills. They practice their cooking. They use a range of produce from the home's own garden when doing this. As a result they are better prepared for a successful transition to adult life.

Young people participate positively in their education. They attend their education regularly. The facilities and educational resources available at the home have helped young people to practice their educational skills and to achieve.

Quality of care

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

Young people receive outstanding support to know about and to contribute to their care and placement plans as they wish. Their care needs are agreed with themselves and their social workers and are recorded in very good detail for reference within their care files. Care plans are tailored to meet their individual needs. They describe clearly how measureable outcomes are achieved with young people coming to visit the home. Care team meetings are arranged regularly to review the effectiveness of the plans and to monitor progress in their health, education and overall development. Young people receive outstanding encouragement to attend their meetings regularly. Where they do not wish to attend in person, their views are gathered and written down for these meetings. The staff team also provide detailed reports which help to inform these meetings. The manager at the home closely monitors review meeting outcomes to help ensure that they are implemented effectively.

The staff team complete detailed risk assessments in partnership with social workers prior to the admission of any young person to the home. This helps ensure that young people are admitted safely and are helped to settle in quickly. There is an effective admission procedure. Written information including a photograph of the exterior of the home are provided to young people in advance of their stay where possible. This helps them to be more familiar with the service they will receive and the house they will live in. However, the current guide does not include any photographs of the interior of the home. The staff team support young people to help them maintain contact with their family and friends during each visit.

The home is very comfortable. Its location allows good access to local public transport. The communal areas are well decorated, furnished and equipped. Each young person has their own bedroom. The dining areas, lounge and study rooms are well presented and furnished. Young people themselves are regularly consulted regarding the décor and furnishing of the home. Their views are incorporated into the programme of ongoing improvements. The kitchen is well used and has sufficient equipment and fittings. There are more than sufficient bathroom facilities.

The individual food preferences of each young person are known to staff and are recorded for reference. Young people are involved in menu choice and can go shopping with staff. The staff team regularly encourage them to contribute their ideas to menu planning and to be actively involved in preparing meals. The home has its own vegetable plot. Produce from it is used in the meals prepared, when in season. The range of food provided at the home includes healthy choices and examples of food from different cultures.

Young people benefit from outstanding arrangements put in place to support and meet their health needs. To help achieve this, the staff team are trained in first aid, the safe administration of medication as well as safe food hygiene. They ensure that any medication needed by young people is stored and administered safely.

Young people enjoy very positive and supportive relationships with the staff team. Social workers placing young people at the home describe the staff as 'a solid team who work together.' Some also describe how the staff deserve 'great credit for the work they do.' One describes how staff 'work well with me when I visit'.

Young people receive outstanding encouragement to give their views on how the home is run. The manager and staff team incorporate the suggestions they make into their ongoing planning to further improve the service provided. Young people know how to complain if they were ever unhappy.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

There are outstanding arrangements in place at the home which are used by the staff team to safeguard the young people who live there. There is detailed safeguarding guidance and reporting procedures available to staff. They also receive regular training to help them protect young people from abuse and to keep them safe. The staff team complete very thorough risk assessments in partnership with young people and their social workers. Young people describe how they 'always' feel safe living at the home.

There are clear procedures in place which are used by staff to help ensure that when young people go missing they are found and kept safe, as quickly as possible. The procedures in place have been discussed and agreed with local authority safeguarding staff and the police. The staff team have clear guidance which they use effectively to minimise any risk of bullying to young people. Very positively, young people themselves confirmed that they had never experienced bullying whilst staying at the home.

Young people enjoy very positive relationships with each other and with the staff team. Training is given to staff in the appropriate use of physical restraint. However, the use of restraint has rarely been necessary. There is also detailed guidance for staff to follow regarding the use of agreed sanctions. Sanctions are used only occasionally at the home. A range of agreed incentives are used very regularly to further promote the positive behaviour of young people.

The staff team complete detailed risk assessments and use these to help ensure the home is a safe place for young people to live in. Regular checks are also completed on the safety equipment used to help protect young people. However, some of these checks are not completed at the frequency agreed in the fire safety risk assessment for the home. The staff team are trained to know what to do in any emergency. They

practice this very regularly with all of the young people who come to visit the home.

The young people who use the service benefit from a very stable staff team. Arrangements are in place to complete checks on any new staff team members to ensure they are suitable to work with children. Any visitors to the home are closely supervised to help ensure that children are kept safe when they are present.

Leadership and management

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

The leadership and management arrangements at the home are effective. A Statement of Purpose is in place which gives good information about the service provided at the home. However, some of the information contained within it has recently changed and has not yet been updated. Young people receive their own guide to the home. It is presented to a good standard and contains clear information about how the service is provided. However, the current document does not contain all of the information recommended. For example how young people can contact their own independent reviewing officer.

The staff team are very experienced in working with children and young people and are very well qualified. They receive regular supervision and attend additional training opportunities. The manager closely monitors staffing levels and further adjusts these where necessary to ensure that young people receive the support they need.

There are good systems in place which are used by the manager to monitor the home's records and to create monthly reports regarding the quality of the service provided to young people. However, copies of these monitoring reports are not currently provided for information to Ofsted at the intervals recommended. Young people, their parents and their social workers are regularly consulted by the manager. They consider the information gathered when planning further improvements to the service.

Monitoring visits to the home also take place on behalf of the registered provider. However, the reports created from these visits do not always cover each of the matters recommended in sufficient detail. In addition, the views of the parents and relatives of the children accommodated at the home are not gathered. Positively, there were no actions or recommendations made at the previous inspection visit.

Equality and diversity practice is **outstanding**.