

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	14/08/2012
Inspector	Dennis Bradley
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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.

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**.

Overall this home provides a very good quality of care and staff work hard to promote improved outcomes for the young people. Young people have very good relationships with staff and are positive about the quality of care they receive during their stays at the home. One young person said, 'I love the home and what they do'. Another said, 'It's great, I get help and support'. Good staffing levels contribute to the highly personalised care and support that the young people benefit from. Staff actively consult young people about their care and plans for their future. Young people feel safe and staff are proactive in their endeavours to make sure their welfare is promoted and safeguarded.

Staff have very good relationships with other professionals and agencies which enables young people to access a good range of opportunities and resources. Young people receive excellent support and staff are exceptionally good at promoting positive outcomes for young people during their stays at the home. The management team ensures the home is well managed. They have a clear understanding of the home's strengths and areas for development. Staff are committed to developing the service to improve outcomes for young people. There are shortfalls relating to: evaluation of care planning, how young people are consulted and informing Ofsted of serious incidents.

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)	notify Ofsted if any of the relevant events listed in column 1 of the table in Schedule 5 takes place. In particular, this relates to any serious illness or serious accident sustained by a child accommodated in the home. (Regulation 30(1))	21/09/2012

Recommendations

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

- ensure young people understand how their views have been taken into account. In particular, where the views and wishes expressed by young people within young people's meetings are not acted upon, ensure the reasons are explained to the young people concerned (NMS 1.2)
- ensure children are cared for in line with their individual placement or short break care plan. Specifically that there are clear measurable outcomes (NMS 25)
- ensure young people are regularly involved in contributing to monitoring the operation of the home. In particular, ensure visits carried out under Regulation 33 include consultation with young people accommodated in the home. (NMS 21.1)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people receive personalised support to meet their needs, as well as quality one-to-one time with staff. This helps them feel valued. They are also able to take part in a wide range of positive and enjoyable activities and outings within the local community and further afield. This helps them develop their social skills and builds their confidence and self-esteem. Asked what's good about the home a young person said, 'the break from home and the activities I've done'. Another young person said, 'you meet new people and get to go out'.

Young people are able to actively participate in day-to-day decisions about their care and what they do during their stay at the home. They take part in regular young people's meetings where they are asked for their views about, for example, the quality of care they receive and the standard of the accommodation. It is evident that the views and suggestions young people express at these meeting are taken

into account by staff. However, where young people's requests or suggestions are not acted upon, it is not always clear how they young people concerned are helped to understand why. If the reasons for reaching such a decision are not clearly explained to the young people concerned, they may feel their views have not been taken seriously.

Young people receive good support and encouragement from staff to engage positively in their education. During their stays they have good attendance at their schools or other education placements. This is supported by the routines of the home and regular communication between staff and schools. Young people also have good opportunities and support to develop life skills they will need as adults, such as planning and cooking meals.

Young people's health and wellbeing is actively promoted and they receive encouragement and support to make informed choices about all aspects of their well-being. They have good access to sources of advice and support on health and personal care issues. This helps ensure that any concerns or issues are addressed quickly. Those young people with specific vulnerabilities or additional needs get the support and slow introductions they need to make a successful stay.

Young people are cared for by a stable, very experienced team of staff. Young people say they feel safe when staying at the home. They receive good advice and support about how to stay safe and how to understand and manage their behaviour differently.

Young people benefit from appropriate contact with family members. They also receive good support from staff to understand and cope with any emotional distress such contact can sometimes cause. The effective communication between staff, social workers and parents means that, where appropriate, young people are supported to continue living with their families. The social worker for one young person said, 'He is happier and the placement helped prevent the family breakdown'.

Quality of care

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

This home provides time-limited, short break placements for young people. This means there has been a significant number of young people placed at the home since the last inspection. However, staff are highly skilled and very experienced and they are exceptionally good at using the limited time they have, to build constructive, warm relationships with the young people. There is excellent matching of the mix of young people staying at any time to ensure that young people have equal opportunities to have a positive experience. It is also evident that, during their stays at the home, young people benefit from the excellent care, support and guidance they receive. Young people know how to make a complaint if they are unhappy about something and feel staff take their views and opinions seriously.

Staff are exceptionally good at supporting young people engage in their education

and attend school during their stays at the home. Some staff are also trained to provide young people with opportunities to achieve more vocational awards. These can contribute to the qualifications they can achieve in their formal education. Staff advocate on behalf of young people to ensure they have an appropriate educational placement. They maintain very regular contact with schools, which enables them to help address any issues quickly and supports young people's continuing attendance and achievement. Young people's achievements and progress are celebrated by the home; this helps promote their self-esteem and confidence.

Young people benefit from having individual placement plans that detail how their needs will be addressed. Staff have a very good understanding of the young people's needs and backgrounds and they ensure they are cared for in line with their placement plans. Young people are encouraged to play an active role in the development and review of their plans. Where appropriate, staff work closely and constructively with young people's parents and carers. This helps to ensure continuity of care and good outcomes for young people. Staff also work exceptionally well with social workers and other professionals to make sure young people's plans are implemented consistently. Asked if there was anything the home could do a social worker said, 'Nothing, staff go the extra mile'.

Staff are exceptionally child focused in their practice and they have a very positive view of young people. They place a strong value on making positive relationships with young people and listening to and respecting them. Staff make sure young people are actively involved in decisions about their care and what they do during their stays at the home. Staff are exceptionally good at encouraging and supporting young people to engage in a wide variety of activities. They are active and busy, and fully involved. This provides them with new, positive experiences which promote their emotional and social development. Staff and young people are involved in activities in the local community, for example the home has its own allotment nearby.

Staff endeavour to work constructively to reduce the incidences of negative behaviour displayed by the young people. During their stays at the home young people make significant progress in this regard, so relationships at home can improve and young people get support to remain in their with their families.

There are good arrangements for storing, administering and monitoring the young people's medication which help protect their health and meet their health care needs. Young people benefit from the very good links the home has with a range of health care services. Also, some of the staff had specific training in how to support and promote young people's health and well-being. Young people stay in an environment that is comfortable, homely and meets their needs. The house is decorated and furnished to a very good standard and provides a safe setting for young people. The home has good relationships with its neighbours.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Staff are good at protecting young people's welfare by implementing the home's safeguarding procedures, risk assessments and reporting procedures. They have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities in keeping young people safe. Staff are proactive in safeguarding young people. For example, they provide young people with high levels of supervision to reduce the opportunities they have to engage in risky behaviours. Young people said they felt safe living at the home. Significantly, professionals were unanimous in their positive view, saying staff know how to protect young people and safeguard their welfare. Asked what was good about the home a parent said it, 'kept my child safe'.

Staff have had training in countering bullying and they have written guidance to follow to minimise the risk of bullying. They are alert to potential bullying situations and records demonstrate they provide appropriate support to young people. They plan care to protect those who are vulnerable. There have been no incidents of bullying behaviour for over nine months. Young people said they were not being bullied and that staff deal with any bullying behaviour that does occur.

Staff work effectively with the police and other professionals to minimise the risk to young people who go missing. This helps keep young people safe. Staff try hard to help young people who are at risk of going missing understand the risks to their safety and welfare. The high level of supervision staff provide also means that young people do not go missing very often. Staff are very good at supporting young people to develop positive behaviour and social skills. Their success is, in part, due to the way they actively engage young people in a broad range of positive and enjoyable activities during their stays at the home. Staff rarely use sanctions and when they do these are appropriate. They also seldom use physical restraint on young people. When they do, it is proportionate and only to keep them or others safe.

The local authority has clear and comprehensive staff recruitment and selection procedures. These help make sure only suitable people are employed to care for the young people. No new staff have commenced working at the home since the last full inspection. Young people live in a home that is safe and secure. For example, staff and young people take part in regular fire drills and there are good systems to enable staff to identify and minimise any risks or hazards.

Leadership and management

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

The home has a Statement of Purpose that provides clear, accessible information about how it operates. It is child focused and clearly sets out how young people will be cared for. There is also a young people's guide, in different formats, which tells them what it is like. It includes important information, such as how to complain or contact an independent advocate.

The management team provide good and effective leadership for the staff team. They ensure the home has a clear ethos and staff work with commonly understood

objectives. The management team continually monitor and review the quality of care provided by the home. They are committed to improving the service to young people and have a clear development plan for the home. This includes, for example, accessing training for staff on facilitating family group conferences, to improve the support provided to young people returning home. The manager took appropriate action to address the one requirement made at the last inspection. Visits to the home are now carried out every month to monitor the standard of care provided to young people. This helps ensure young people are cared for appropriately and are safeguarded. However, reports for the visits carried out between February and June of this year indicate that on only one occasion did a visitor speak to any young people. Consequently, young people are not regularly involved in contributing to the monitoring process.

Placement plans do not always identify clear measureable outcomes for each young person. This means staff are not always able to evaluate the success of these plans and demonstrate the progress made in meeting each young person's individual needs. Legislation requires the registered person to notify Ofsted of any serious incident. However, they failed to do so on two occasions. Consequently, the regulator was unable to monitor the action taken by the home regarding these incidents and the outcome.

All staff have a relevant qualification and are very experienced in caring for young people. They are committed to meeting the diverse needs of the young people and strive to promote good outcomes for them. This is supported by the effective planning of young people's short breaks to ensure that they are placed with other young people who have similar needs, interests and capabilities. Staff have access to good training opportunities in caring for children and young people. Staff also receive good support and supervision. This helps them to have a good understanding of young people's needs and how to support them and keep them safe. Staffing levels are good and enable staff to spend time meeting the individual needs of the young people.

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.