

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Bill Drumm
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This local authority children's home provides care and accommodation for up to three children 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**.

The home provides a very good level of care for young people. Children contribute effectively to their care plans and have a good understanding of the progress they make in their lives. Outcomes for all young people are good. They do well in education, enjoy good health, and take part in a range of activities in the local community, which includes visiting and staying with friends.

The home is very comfortable and well appointed. The atmosphere created by the staff and young people is informal, friendly and cheerful. Staff are clearly committed to achieving the best outcomes for the young people and the young people themselves know that the staff genuinely care for them.

The young people generally get on well with each other. Minor disagreements that sometimes arise are dealt with calmly and without fuss. Bullying does not happen at the home. Staff work hard to ensure that all young people are kept safe and free from harm.

Management arrangements within the home are good. However, there are some shortfalls in the home's record keeping and external monitoring. The written details of when a young person has been missing from home are not retained on the young person's file. Although young people going missing from the home is an infrequent occurrence, accurate recording is essential if patterns of behaviour are to be identified. In addition, the comments of young people about the outcome of any complaints they may have made are not recorded. This does not show that young people are being listened to. Additionally, the independent visitor to the home does

not speak privately and in confidence with staff. This does not allow staff the opportunity to express any concerns they may have confidentially.

The home has taken positive steps to address a previous recommendation in relation to the recording of staff training. The manner in which all staff training is recorded is now clearly presented.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure that all staff receive training in the home's complaints process and that young people are able to comment on the outcome of any complaints they may have made (Volume 5, statutory guidance, paragraph 2.29)
- ensure that a written copy of all incidents of when a young person being missing from home, and the use of any measures of control or restraint is retained on their personal file (NMS 22)
- ensure that, during every visit, the person carrying out the visits under Regulation 33 speaks in private with staff working at the home. (NMS 21.7)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people enjoy good health. Staff ensure that they access all the services they need to promote their well-being. Young people who participate in risky behaviours, such as drug taking, are actively encouraged and supported to change their behaviour. Progress in helping young people reduce their risky behaviour is not always achieved but staff remain resolute in their attempts. Young people enjoy a good, nutritious diet. One young person who is preparing for independent life said, 'I've got my own cook book with recipes I've learned to make. Staff are always on hand to help out and keep me on the right track.'

Overall, young people have good attendance at school. Staff offer young people daily support and encouragement to attend school and try to explain the importance of a good education. This is reflected in the progress that all young people have made in their educational attainments since they were placed in the home. One young person said, 'I've been to college to do better in my GCSEs. Now I'm just waiting for an apprenticeship.' Young people are supported to achieve their maximum potential.

The young people at the home have lived together for a number of years. They do have the odd argument but generally they get on well with each other. They cooperate with staff in carrying out both their personal household tasks and jobs to keep the home looking nice. This ensures that they are encouraged to take some

responsibility for their own care and to learn activities for daily living.

Staff enable young people to make sense of their background and to understand why they have to live in the home. Where appropriate, family contact is encouraged and staff go out of their way to facilitate and support it. One young person is preparing to move on from the home and into independent living. Staff are working hard to ensure that the young person has all the necessary items to live comfortably and to acquire the necessary skills to be independent.

Quality of care

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

Staff have an easy going, informal approach to looking after young people and this helps to create a relaxed but orderly atmosphere within the home. One young person said, 'It's good here and I really like it. Staff have been excellent in helping me and I've made loads of progress.' The assessment of the individual needs of young people have been carried out prior to young people moving into the home. Care plans are user friendly and accessible. This encourages the young person to contribute to this in a meaningful way. It also provides a record of the progress the young person has made in a way which is easily understood. This helps to promote their self-esteem. Key-working systems are effective in helping to promote each young person's development. Members of staff understand the needs of young people and work hard to ensure these are met.

Staff enable all young people to make significant improvements in their overall health. They ensure that all young people attend regular check-ups with primary health care providers and, where necessary, receive specialist health care input. Examples of this include advice being given through the sexual health service and drug and alcohol service. Young people have a good understanding of healthy lifestyles and are motivated to make positive choices in respect of diet and exercise.

There is good communication between the home and education providers. Staff actively support and encourage attendance at school, college or training. This consistency of approach contributes to the overall good attendance of young people. All have made progress educationally and take pride in their achievements. Staff take care to praise all achievements which reinforces to young people the importance of doing well and helps to build their self-esteem.

The home works hard to encourage young people to become involved in community-based activities. These include swimming, attending a local gym and going to the cinema. In addition, the young people also enjoy socialising with friends in the local community.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

The home has clear policies and procedures in place to help safeguard young people. There has been one occasion when a young person has been missing from home. The written records of this absence have been completed appropriately. However, a copy of the missing from home record has not been placed on the individual young person's file. This means that monitoring of the locations where the young person has run away to may not be maintained and any patterns of behaviour identified.

The manager and all members of staff are trained in safeguarding. Regular refresher training takes place to keep their skills and knowledge up to date. This helps to ensure they are both confident and competent in dealing with any safeguarding issues should they arise. There have been no safeguarding concerns since the last inspection. In addition, there are no recorded incidents of bullying having occurred within the home.

Young people are encouraged to behave appropriately and are supported to take responsibility for their actions. No restraints have been used since the last inspection and sanctions have only been used on five separate occasions. As a contrast, rewards have been given to young people for positive behaviour and attitude on 17 separate occasions. Restorative techniques are promoted. This helps young people to appreciate the impact of their actions and to behave in a more responsible manner.

The young people have lived together for a considerable period of time and they generally get on well together. Young people are very confident and outgoing and are able to make their needs clearly known. Young people say they feel safe and that staff will look out for them. One young person said, 'I've always felt safe here.' Young people are able to make complaints. These are rare and are dealt with by the home's manager. One complaint received did not record the comments of the young person following the manager's investigation. In addition, staff do not receive complaints training. This means young people may not feel listened to and staff may not deal with a complaint appropriately.

Regular checks of the home's fire systems, smoke detectors and emergency lighting are undertaken by the home's manager. Young people take part in fire drills and the time at which fire drills take place are fully recorded. Young people live in a safe environment. Potential risks are minimised and risk assessments are clear, focused and regularly reviewed. Regular checks of gas installations and electrical equipment also take place.

The home has a very stable staff team and there have been no new appointments since the last inspection. The home operates a thorough, detailed and robust recruitment policy. This helps to ensure young people are looked after by suitable people and are protected from potential abuse. Visitors to the home are asked to clearly identify themselves on arrival and to sign the visitor's book.

Leadership and management

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

Following the last inspection, the home has improved its recording of when staff have attended training. This enables the manager to determine whose training is up to date and when refresher training is required.

The management of the home is consistent and effective. In addition, the information for young people in the children's guide provides them with sufficient detail about the home. This means that young people coming to the home know what it will be like to live there and who they can speak to if they are unhappy about anything.

Monthly monitoring of the home by the provider includes consultation with young people and, where appropriate, their parents. However, discussions with staff about the standard of the care provided do not routinely take place. This means that the knowledge and understanding of staff about what strategies may work to help young people develop their independence and mature is not currently borne in mind within this process.

The manager ensures that there are sufficient staff on duty at all times to meet the needs of young people and to keep them safe. Staff have the appropriate qualifications and access to a range of training which is regularly updated. This means that staff have the right skills to provide effective support to young people and ensure that their welfare is promoted. Staff receive regular support from managers through a process of formal supervision and appraisal. This means that staff are fully equipped to deal with the complex issues associated with looking after young people effectively.

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.