

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 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.

Overall effectiveness

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

The outcomes for young people visiting the home are satisfactory. They benefit from good levels of close individual support and enjoy positive supportive relationships with staff. They receive good help with their personal health care needs and are encouraged to lead a healthy and active lifestyle. However, the system used to record and monitor any accidents occurring at the home is not always effective. Young people can practice their cooking skills and contribute their ideas on menu planning. Young people also receive good encouragement from staff to attend their education and employment. They receive good encouragement to 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.

Young people are looked after by a very experienced and stable staff team. They provide young people with good support to help keep them safe. Sanctions, restraints and room searches are rarely needed at the home. However, when they do occur the records are not always completed promptly or in sufficient detail. Young people benefit from a good range of incentives used to celebrate and promote their positive behaviour. The staff team receive good training and support. However, the system used to record and plan training could be presented in better detail. The home is well led and managed. However, some monitoring reports have not been forwarded to Ofsted as requested. In addition, the arrangements used to monitor the service on behalf of the registered provider are not always effective or sufficiently thorough.

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
17B	ensure that the details of any measure of control, restraint or	31/12/2011

(2001)	discipline used at the home are recorded promptly (Regulation 17B (3))	
33 (2001)	ensure that the monitoring reports completed on behalf of the registered provider take place at the frequency required and report on the matters required. (Regulation 33 (3))	31/12/2011

Recommendations

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

- maintain a written record of all treatment and first aid given to children during their placement (NMS 6.15)
- ensure that any room search taking place is conducted and recorded in accordance with the home's guidance (NMS 3.20)
- ensure that the recording system used to monitor and plan staff training is clearly presented (NMS 18.2)
- provide Ofsted with a copy of each monitoring report completed by the manager. (NMS 21.2 and 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 **satisfactory**.

Young people living at the home are making satisfactory progress in all areas of their life. They enjoy good individual support. The staff team is effective in providing support which meets the cultural needs of the young people using the service. Staff talk very regularly with young people about their care needs. The staff team liaises regularly with placing social workers and care team members to further ensure that the outcomes agreed in the care plans of each young person are worked towards. The support provided to young people is regularly monitored by the manager and senior staff to ensure that it remains effective. Detailed care records are maintained by the staff team. These help to demonstrate the satisfactory outcomes enjoyed by young people living at the home.

Young people are making good progress towards leading a healthy and active lifestyle. They can participate in a range of activities within their local community. They can access the health services that they need. The staff team look after them if they are ever unwell. However, the records they need to maintain of any accidents occurring at the home are not fully complete. Young people have access to a very good range of information and resources which can help them to maintain their good health.

Young people make good progress in developing their life skills. They are well prepared for a successful transition to adult life. They practice their independent living skills regularly and have access to a good range of resources at the home to help them achieve this.

Young people achieve satisfactory outcomes in their education. They receive regular opportunities to participate in work experience and employment opportunities. However, not all young people attend their education or employment opportunities regularly. The facilities and educational resources available at the home are sufficient to help young people to practice and develop their educational skills and to achieve.

Quality of care

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

Young people receive very good support and encouragement to contribute their views to their own care and placement plans. Their care needs are confirmed by staff in partnership with themselves, their placing social workers and their family where this is appropriate. Care plans are individually tailored to meet the individual needs of each young person. They demonstrate clearly how measureable outcomes are being achieved with the young people who live at the home. Care team meetings take place regularly. These meetings help review the effectiveness of care plans and monitor the individual development of each young person. Young people attend their meetings regularly and feel that their views are listened to. The staff team provides very detailed reports which help to inform these meetings. The manager monitors care plans and review meeting outcomes closely. This helps to ensure that they are implemented effectively. Young people describe the care and support they receive as 'good'. They describe the time they spend with their key worker as 'really good'. One placing social worker commended the 'warmth and friendliness' of the staff team. Another described how the parent they work with was 'delighted' with the progress their child was making living at the home.

Prior to the admission of any young person to the home, the staff team complete detailed risk assessments in partnership with social workers. These help to ensure that young people are admitted safely and can settle in quickly. There is an agreed admission procedure in place. Written information, including photographs of the home, is provided to young people in advance of their stay. This helps them to be more familiar with the service they will receive and the house they will live in. The staff team provides good support to young people to help them maintain contact with their family and friends.

The building presents as a comfortable family home. It has good access to local public transport. The communal areas of the home are well decorated, furnished and equipped. The dining area and lounge are well presented and furnished. The kitchen is well equipped and presented. There are more than sufficient bathroom facilities. Each young person has their own bedroom and they can contribute their views regarding its decoration as well as the décor and furnishing of the home overall.

Young people are involved in menu choice. Their individual food preferences are confirmed and recorded for reference. They can go shopping with staff. They are encouraged to be actively involved in the preparation of meals and to contribute their ideas to menu planning. The range of food provided at the home includes healthy choices and examples of food from different cultures.

The staff team are trained in first aid. They also receive training in the safe administration of medication and safe food hygiene. Any medication needed by young people is stored and administered safely.

Young people enjoy very positive and supportive relationships with the staff team. They receive very good support and encouragement from staff to give their views on how the home is run. Their views are incorporated by the manager where possible into their ongoing planning to further improve the service. Young people also know how to complain if they are ever unhappy.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

There are good arrangements at the home which are used to safeguard the young people who live there. The staff team have access to detailed safeguarding guidance and reporting procedures. They receive regular training to help them protect young people from abuse and to keep them safe. They complete detailed risk assessments in partnership with young people and their social workers. These arrangements all help to ensure that young people feel safe living at the home.

The staff team follow agreed procedures to help ensure that when young people go missing they are found and kept safe, as quickly as possible. These procedures have been discussed and agreed with local authority safeguarding staff and the police. The arrangements have worked effectively in recent months to help reduce the number of occasions that young people go missing. The staff team also have clear guidance which they use effectively to minimise any risk of bullying to young people. There have been no instances of bullying at the home in the period since the last inspection visit.

Young people enjoy very positive relationships with the staff team. Training is given to staff in the appropriate use of physical restraint. The use of restraint has rarely been necessary in the period since the previous inspection visit. However, when it has been used the records have not been completed promptly, within the required timescales. There is detailed guidance for staff to follow regarding the use of agreed sanctions where this is necessary. A range of agreed incentives are used very regularly to support and promote the very positive behaviour of young people living at the home. Room searches are occasionally necessary to help ensure that all young people are safe living at the home. However, the records maintained do not always indicate clearly that each search has been conducted and recorded in accordance with the written guidance at the home.

The staff team use agreed health and safety procedures to help ensure that the home remains a safe place for young people to live. Checks are completed on the safety equipment used to help protect young people. The staff team are trained to know what to do in any emergency. They practice this with all of the young people who live at the home.

Young people benefit from a very stable staff team. There are good arrangements to complete checks on any new staff team members. These help 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 **good**.

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. Young people receive their own guide to the home. It also contains good information about how the service is provided and is very well presented.

The staff are well qualified and are very experienced in working with children and young people. They receive regular supervision and additional training opportunities. However, the training monitor used to record and plan staff training is not clearly presented. The manager monitors daily staffing levels at the home closely. These are adjusted when necessary to ensure that young people receive the support they need.

There are good systems 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. Young people, their parents and their social workers are regularly consulted as part of this process. The information gathered from this monitoring is used by the manager to plan further improvements to the service. However, some of these reports have not been forwarded to Ofsted as requested.

Monitoring visits to the home also take place on behalf of the registered provider. However, these visits do not always occur at the frequency required by regulation and some do not cover all of the matters required. Positively, two of the three recommendations made at the previous inspection visit have been implemented fully by the manager and staff team.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.