

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Bill Drumm
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The children's home provides care and accommodation for up to three young people with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. The provider is a local authority.

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 staff and manager provide care which is supportive and effective. They are enthusiastic about the care they provide and have high aspirations for the young people in their care. This helps the young people to mature and to develop appropriate behaviour. They have developed from their starting points, with regard to their emotional well-being, relationships with others and staying safe. Staff encourage young people to continue this progress and to achieve the best possible life chances.

Young people also make good progress in their education and health. Attendance and achievement at school is actively encouraged and all success is celebrated. Young people generally behave well and get on with each other and with the staff. Staff rarely use sanctions to encourage young people to moderate their behaviour and the use of restraint is also infrequent.

The staff team support young people to learn appropriate knowledge and skills which will be helpful to them when they are older and living independently. The staff team are all qualified. They receive regular supervision and feel well supported.

The manager and provider separately monitor the quality of care to identify improvements that may be necessary. However, the independent visitor does not routinely discuss the care provided to young people with staff members. Their opinions about how the quality of care within the home can be improved are therefore not taken into account. In addition, some important recording is not taking place: following individual key worker sessions held between young people and staff members; in restraint records; and young people who are eligible do not have up-to-

date and comprehensive pathway plans in place.

As a result of this inspection, Ofsted has made five recommendations which address these reported shortfalls.

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 each young person who is eligible has an up to date and comprehensive pathway plan in place to aid their transition into adulthood (NMS 12)
- where any sanctions, disciplinary measures or restraint are used, children are encouraged to have their views recorded in the records kept by the home (NMS 3.18)
- review the use of sanctions within the home to ensure they are both fair and reasonable (NMS 3.8)
- ensure that young people are spoken to following their return from being missing from home to ascertain their reasons for being missing and their whereabouts whilst missing (NMS 5.9)
- 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**.

The life chances of young people are improved by living at this home and from the care they receive. They are supported to learn and experience new things and to become involved in decisions that affect their lives. Attendance and achievement at school is monitored closely and all success is celebrated. Young people are given the opportunity to undertake both vocational and non-vocational courses of study. One young person said: 'School's ok. I'm doing better now and I'm doing well in tests and things.' Regular school attendance and new learning helps young people to achieve their full potential and to grow in confidence.

Young people have regular formal and informal meetings with their key workers. Key worker meetings provide an opportunity for the staff to monitor the care provided and the progress being made by young people. One young person said: 'I like my key worker, they're great to talk to and funny sometimes. I can talk to them about anything.' However, the content of key worker meetings is not recorded in a timely fashion. This means the discussions between staff and young people will not be accurately recorded and the views of young people may not be captured, for

example, following episodes of missing from home. In addition, the key worker system will not be fully effective in helping young people to achieve their agreed goals and to develop new ones.

Health outcomes for young people are positive. Young people are registered with all relevant primary health care providers and specialist health care advice and support is given to those who need it, when they need it. The looked after child nurse is a regular visitor to the home. This helps young people to feel comfortable discussing health issues that may affect them. One young person said: 'Staff make sure I'm well and they help me to attend appointments when I need to go.' A member of staff said: 'I come in sometimes just to take young people to their appointments, I don't have to but I choose to do it.' The good health of young people is promoted and safeguarded.

Young people receive help and support to develop their self-esteem and a positive self-image. They are encouraged to become involved in the local community and further afield. Examples of this include trips to the gym, meeting friends in the local community and dog walking. Young people also receive help and support to learn new things and to develop their independence. They are encouraged to take part in budgeting, shopping for food items, meal preparation and to prepare their own snacks. The home is in the process of developing a structured programme to teach young people daily living skills and activities. This will help to equip them with the practical skills necessary to take care of themselves. However, those young people who are old enough do not have an up-to-date and comprehensive pathway plan in place. Young people will not, therefore, receive the appropriate help and support necessary to make a successful transition into adulthood.

Quality of care

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

Young people have a say in how the home is run. Relationships between members of staff and young people were observed to be very warm and friendly and there is a culture of on-going open and honest dialogue between the manager, staff and young people. Young people also take part in regular house meetings and they are encouraged to make their views known. Decisions made at house meetings are fully recorded. Members of staff strive to provide an environment in which young people can be happy and flourish. Young people spoken to said: 'I like it here, the home's great.' No complaints have been made by young people. They make good progress and are happy living at the home.

Young people generally behave well and they usually get on well with each other and with the staff. One young person said: 'We all get on well together most of the time, we sometimes fall out but that's just normal.'

Staff encourage young people to take part in exercise and to keep fit. Young people said: 'We like the food here. We have a say in the menu and can help with the grocery shopping if we want to, there's a list on the front of the fridge of things we'd

like buying.' All staff are appropriately qualified to administer first aid and medication if necessary and all relevant consent forms are in place. There is clear accountability for the administration of all medication and first aid.

The home and garden are well-maintained. Young people live in an environment that is warm, comfortable and homely.

Each young person has a residential placement plan which the staff read to ensure they are up-to-date with it and know how young people's needs are to be met. The views of young people are taken into account and reflected in the plans. Regular monitoring and review of the care provided to young people takes place. This enables staff to evaluate the care they provide. Written records of all statutory reviews undertaken are available within the home. The changing needs of young people are met in a prompt and timely fashion. Cultural needs are also made clear and the staff show a clear commitment to enabling young people to gain their own sense of identity.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

The home has systems in place to help safeguard young people. Young people spoken to said they felt safe and well looked after. There have been a number of occasions since the last inspection when a young person has been missing from the home. Written records relating to young people being missing are completed accurately and thoroughly. The home's manager monitors closely all circumstances in which young people go missing and written records show that such instances are decreasing. A police officer spoken to said: 'I'm coming to this home less and less to do welfare checks on young people who've been missing. The partnership working between us, the home and social services is excellent.' This means young people are starting to take responsibility for their own welfare and understand the danger they are putting themselves in by going missing.

Bullying does not occur within the home and young people say they feel safe. The manager and all members of staff are fully trained in safeguarding and countering bullying. Regular refresher training is provided to keep their skills and knowledge up-to-date. This helps to ensure they are both confident and competent to deal with any safeguarding issues that arise.

Members of staff promote a culture of positive behaviour within the home and encourage young people to take responsibility for their actions. Restorative techniques and reward systems are favoured before sanctions or other punitive measures are used. However, sanctions are occasionally necessary to help young people modify their behaviour. All sanctions and rewards are recorded. One particular sanction given by a member of staff following a young person being missing from the home overnight, was reviewed during the inspection. As a result, the home's manager reviewed the sanction and it was changed to be more proportionate. Staff and young people are aware that all sanctions should be

proportionate. Although no restraints have been used at the home for some time, the written record of restraints used does not include all the information required. This means that if a restraint happens the full details of the event would not be recorded.

The manager carries out regular checks of the home's fire systems, smoke detectors and emergency lighting. Young people take part in fire drills which are fully recorded, including the time of the fire drill. Young people live in a safe environment because the home has a thorough and systematic approach to risk management. Risk assessments are clear, focused and regularly reviewed. Regular checks of gas installations and electrical equipment also take place.

There have been several new staff appointed since the last inspection. The home operates a 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 identify themselves on arrival and to sign the visitors' book.

Leadership and management

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

The home has a Statement of Purpose that is regularly reviewed and which provides clear information about how the home operates. The young people's guide to the home is both clear and comprehensive. It tells them what it is like to live at the home and who they can contact if they are worried about anything or have a complaint.

The manager provides good, clear leadership to the staff team. Staff know what is expected of them and what they are trying to achieve for the young people in their care. One staff member said: 'This is different to any other job I've had before. It can be a challenge sometimes but I wouldn't swap it now. I'm really happy here.' In addition, staff receive regular supervision, support and training. All staff are suitably qualified. Young people benefit from an enthusiastic, energetic and well trained staff team.

Monitoring visits from someone independent of the home take place every month. The person undertaking these visits talks to young people and their family members. However, they do not routinely have discussions with staff members. The opinions of staff about the care delivered to young people and how the home is run are therefore not routinely taken into account.

Staffing levels are good and enable staff to spend time meeting the individual needs of the young people. One member of staff said: 'There's always enough staff on duty but some like it here so much they even come in on their days off to do extra things with the young people. We have a great team spirit and help each other out as much as we can.' Regular staff meetings are held and there is effective communication within the staff team. This helps staff to keep up-to-date with any changes to young people's needs or circumstances.

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.