

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Dennis Bradley
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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

The children's home is located in a village and provides accommodation for up to three young people aged 12 to 17 years old who have emotional or behavioural difficulties. The provider is a local authority.

Overall effectiveness

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

Overall this home provides a good quality of care and staff endeavour to promote improved outcomes for the young people.

Young people spoken to were positive about the quality of the care and support staff provide as well as their relationships with staff. One young person said they knew that staff cared about them and wanted them to do well. Staff are good at providing support to meet the individual needs of each young person and young people benefit from having individual care plans and risk assessments. Staff actively promote and safeguard the welfare of young people, they take appropriate action to address any bullying behaviour and young people feel safe living at the home. There was evidence that young people are making progress regarding their welfare and development.

Staff work closely with other professionals and agencies to ensure young people access a good range of opportunities and resources. They actively encourage and support young people to develop and achieve. Young people benefit from living in a homely environment that is safe and caring.

Staffing levels are good and enable staff to spend one-to-one time with each young person. The management team ensured staff shortfalls during the summer, for example due to staff sickness, were well managed and this, and the flexibility of the staff team, helped reduce the potential disruption to the young people. There are good arrangements for the support, supervision and training of staff. These help make sure staff have the skills, knowledge and understanding needed to care for the young people.

Overall the management team ensures the home is managed efficiently and effectively. However, the arrangements for monitoring the homes records, and addressing any issues identified, are not sufficiently robust. For example, staff do not always keep satisfactory records of the meals provided to young people and this makes it difficult to assess whether staff actively promote and support healthy eating. Also, behaviour management plans for young people are not always fully in line with relevant government guidance on the use of restraint.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure young people's behaviour management plans are in line with relevant government guidance on the application of physical intervention and restraint (NMS 3.14)
- ensure there are clear and effective arrangements for monitoring all records kept by the home and that appropriate action is taken to address any issues raised by this monitoring. (NMS 21.2)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people benefit from the good levels of support and guidance given to them by the staff. They are all successfully attending school and have shown good progress within it. Young people also positively engage in activities within the local community such as attending keep fit classes. Staff encourage young people to take part in activities such as shopping and the preparation and cooking of healthy meals, to enable them to acquire some of the skills they will need for independent living. Young people confirmed staff help them to learn skills they will need in later life.

Staff try hard to help young people understand the importance of having a healthy lifestyle and they actively promote their health and well-being. Staff encourage the young people to eat healthy meals and give them appropriate choices regarding the food they eat. However, staff do not always keep satisfactory records of meals planned and served, which can make it difficult to assess whether the young people do have a diet which helps to promote their health and physical well-being. Staff are aware of the different dietary preferences and needs of the young people. Young people have good access to sources of advice and support on health and personal care issues, appropriate to their needs and wishes. Staff are good at monitoring the health of the young people and they take appropriate action where necessary.

There are good arrangements for storing, administering and monitoring the young people's medication. Staff who administer medication to young people have had training in safety with medicines. These arrangements help to protect young people's health and meet their health care needs. There is always an appropriately trained member of staff on duty should a young person require first aid.

Staff are very good at supporting and encouraging young people to maintain appropriate contact with their families and friends. For example, they provide practical support such as transport when needed.

Quality of care

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

Young people benefit from having individual placement plans that detail how their social, educational and health needs will be addressed. Young people are cared for in line with their placement plans. Staff encourage young people to play an active role in the development and review of their plans and ensure their views are fully taken into account.

It is evident that young people are confident about being able to raise any issues with staff. Staff make sure the young people are aware of who they can go to if they have any complaints and they take the views and concerns of young people seriously. The home has not received any complaints since the last inspection. Staff make sure young people have opportunities to influence the running of the home, as well as the delivery of their care. For example, staff and young people meet together on a regular basis to discuss what is happening in the home.

The home is well decorated, furnished and maintained and is homely in appearance. Young people each have their own rooms and are able to personalise these by choosing the décor and displaying posters and other items if they wish. Staff also consult young people about the decoration of the communal areas of the home.

During the inspection staff and young people were observed interacting well together. There was overall, a positive atmosphere in the home and relationships between staff and the young people were professional but caring and friendly. Staff are good at helping young people to develop an understanding and tolerance of each others diverse needs. Young people confirmed that they have good relationships with and feel cared for by staff.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Staff receive regular, recorded training in child protection, behaviour management and the use of physical intervention. This training helps make sure, for example, that staff can use physical restraint in such a way that young people are not hurt. Staff are good at protecting young people's welfare by implementing the home's safeguarding procedures, risk assessments and reporting procedures. Staff demonstrated a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities in keeping young people safe. They have very good working relationships with relevant partner agencies such as the local community police. Young people confirmed they feel safe living at the home.

Staff endeavour to protect young people from bullying behaviour and the home has a clear policy on countering bullying. Staff have completed a bullying risk assessment which sets out how the potential for bullying can be minimised.

Staff are good at encouraging and supporting the young people to develop and maintain socially acceptable behaviour. They use sanctions sparingly and these are relevant and reasonable. Staff make sure they respond positively to acceptable behaviour by providing appropriate incentives and rewards. Staff use physical restraint for young people only when this is necessary and proportionate. Young people confirmed staff treat them fairly. However, the records staff keep of sanctions and the use of physical restraint are not always satisfactory. For example, some records do not clearly identify the behaviour leading to the imposition of a sanction or the use of physical restraint. Failure to keep satisfactory records makes it more difficult for the registered person and staff to monitor how young people's behaviour is managed or to ensure it is effective and sensitive to their individual needs. Staff use physical intervention on young people in the context of the positive care plans that have been developed to meet young people's individual needs. However, these behaviour management care plans do not fully comply with relevant government guidance regarding how such plans should be prepared.

Staff are clearly aware of the factors that may trigger young people going missing and they actively try to minimise the risk. They also take appropriate action to keep young people safe if they do go missing or are absent from the home without permission. This includes, where appropriate, carrying out a search in the local area and contacting friends of the young person. There are suitable policies and procedures to help make sure this happens. The management team actively monitors all such incidents and there is evidence of progress in reducing how often, and for how long, young people go missing.

There are good systems in place to keep the young people and adults safe from the risk of fire and other potential hazards. The council also has robust staff recruitment and selection procedures that help make sure the home only employs suitable people. There are suitable arrangements for monitoring and managing visitors to the home. These help ensure they do not have inappropriate access to young people.

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. There is also a young people's guide that provides a useful introduction to the home as well as important information such as how to complain or contact an independent advocate.

There are good arrangements for providing staff with support, supervision and training in caring for children and young people. For example, staff undertake core training such as emergency first aid and can access training that covers the specific needs of young people. The manager and senior staff are suitably qualified and provide effective leadership for the staff team to enable them to provide good outcomes for the young people.

Staffing levels are good and enable staff to spend time meeting the individual needs of the young people. Whenever it is possible there is a mix of male and female staff on duty. During a period when there were shortages in the staff team due, for example, to staff on sick leave, the staff team worked flexibly and this helped ensure continuity of care for the young people. Regular staff meetings and good handover arrangements between shifts help ensure there is effective communication within the staff team. The good on-call arrangements also help make sure staff feel well supported. There is an experienced staff team and staff demonstrate a strong commitment to meeting the complex and diverse needs of the young people living at the home.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The young people receive an individual service designed to meet their personal needs and preferences.

There are satisfactory arrangements for the internal monitoring of the home and the care and welfare of the young people. The registered manager monitors the home's records each month to identify any patterns or issues that may need addressing. However, the monitoring of some records is not sufficiently robust. For example, there are shortfalls in some of the records of sanctions and restraints. The registered manager has addressed the recommendation from the last inspection of the home by Ofsted. This related to the arrangements for notifying the appropriate authorities of significant events.

Staff ensure young people's case files are properly kept and that the records of their needs, development and progress reflect their individuality.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.