

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Mark Kersh
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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 children's home is owned and managed by a Metropolitan Borough Council. The home can accommodate six young people and has been set up specifically to provide care to young people with emotional or behavioural difficulties. It is anticipated that young people will live at the home on a medium to long-term basis.

Overall effectiveness

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

Young people make good progress in relation to their starting points. The home is both well organised and efficient. The home provides a supportive environment in which young people can live. Staff are lively and enthusiastic and provide young people with consistent levels of care. Young people are encouraged and supported to develop their personal skills and abilities and they receive care from a motivated and experienced staff team. The manager and staff understand the strengths of the home and regularly challenge themselves to deliver higher standards.

There is a committed approach to enabling young people to develop socially, physically and emotionally. Staff actively support the education of young people. In addition, links have been made within the local community to help enable young people to experience a range of diverse activities. Young people living at the home are kept safe, well and free from harm.

There are some areas for improvement regarding how the home analyses and acts upon responses from young people, and those significant to them. When young people are missing from the home there are some inappropriate sanctions imposed when young people return to the home. The staff team does not include an equal gender balance to benefit young people through appropriate role models.

The home demonstrates the capacity to improve by successfully addressing the actions set from their own previous development plan.

Areas for improvement

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
17	ensure no measure of control or discipline which is excessive or	07/10/2011

(2001)	unreasonable shall be used at any time on children accommodated in the children's home. (Regulation 17.1)	
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Recommendations

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

- ensure the views, wishes and feelings of children and those significant to them are taken into account in monitoring staff and in developing the home (NMS 1.7)
- ensure the staff group who are in day-to-day contact with children includes staff of both genders whenever possible. (NMS 17.10)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Staff provide young people with structure, routine, encouragement and unconditional support, and this promotes their well-being. Young people benefit from the individualised support provided to them and they learn to cope with past experiences. With excellent support, young people learn to develop their emotional resilience. The services the home provides, promotes continuity in young people's lives and this enables them to form trusting relationships and very positive attachments with staff.

Staff display a committed approach to caring for young people and offer advice and support on how to stay fit and well. Any young people who are ill or suffer accidents are quickly attended to. Young people have clear health plans in place and their individual needs are identified. Young people are encouraged to take regular exercise and are supported to use a range of community facilities and resources. There is a very good approach within the home to promoting the health and well-being of young people. Young people are therefore able to understand the importance of staying healthy and in taking regular exercise.

The education of young people living at the home is both promoted and actively supported by all staff. School attendance of young people living at the home is very good. Young people are able to undertake both vocational and non vocational course of study. One young person said school was alright and that they went every day. A member of staff commented that young people are keen to go to school and do not need persuading to get up in the mornings. Regular school attendance and the opportunity to learn new things helps young people to achieve their full potential.

Young people are clearly listened to through formal and daily informal discussions with staff and the management team. They contribute positively to formal meetings between themselves and staff and this enables them to have a say in how the home

is run. They feel they are listened to and changes are made as a result of their views, opinions and wishes. Regular key worker sessions enable young people to build very good relationship with dedicated staff and to be well informed of placement objectives. Young people are encouraged and supported to attend their placement reviews and to express their views and wishes of their current and future lives.

Young people are supported to establish and maintain constructive contact with families, friends, and other people who play a significant role in their lives. This is sensitively managed and in line with young people's individual placement plans. Young people say that staff have helped them to maintain regular telephone contact with siblings, and facilitate activities outside of the home where they can meet friends. Staff sensitively and supportively handle any issue that may arise from family contact.

Young people receive a consistent level of help and support to learn new things and to develop their independence. Young people are encouraged to take part in meal preparation and to prepare their own snacks. In addition, young people are also encouraged to participate in budgeting and shopping. Young people are supported to develop a positive self image and to be aware of their own personal hygiene needs. Staff adopt a sensitive approach to this and support young people to be as independent as possible. This helps to prepare young people for their transition into adulthood and independent living. Young people who have moved on to adult life have sustained engagement in education, employment or training.

Quality of care

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

Young people speak positively about the relationship they have with staff. The interaction between staff and young people is calm, relaxed and good natured with lots of humour. Staff handle difficult and potentially challenging situations calmly and with confidence. Staff form strong, positive and constructive relationships with the young people in their care.

Young people living at this home are appropriately placed and very happy and settled. They benefit from a range of opportunities to contribute positively to the day to day running of this home. Regular consultation with them, their families and placing social workers provide the management team and staff with an independent view of the services and care the home provides. However, responses from significant people are not analysed and on occasion not acted upon. This feedback is valuable to the operation of the home and improving outcomes for young people.

Information is made available to young people so they know how, and to whom they can make a complaint. They confirm they know how the process works. Young people can be sure that all complaints are taken seriously with a robust investigation carried out in close liaison with other professionals, if indicated, and outcomes relayed back to the complainant. Records of complaints are well maintained and

monitored by the manager.

Detailed, individualised and regularly updated placement plans are in place. They draw together all available information from a wide variety of sources to clearly identify young people's unique and holistic needs and how their needs will be best met. The stable staff team have an in-depth knowledge of the young people and consequently know how to support them effectively. Needs arising from young people's cultural background and personal identity are clearly recorded and met.

Reviews take place at the required frequencies and young people attend and actively participate. Staff produce progress reports to inform the discussions which are described by independent reviewing officers as 'comprehensive' and they empower young people to voice their opinions about their own futures. Staff say, 'we actively promote young people's rights and encourage them to participate in decisions regarding the home'.

Young people are encouraged to enjoy a healthy lifestyle. Individual dietary needs are catered for and all staff have undergone training in safe food hygiene. Each young person has written consent forms in place in order for staff to administer medication or first aid where this is necessary. Staff have also had training in the safe handling and administration of medication and epilepsy management. The welfare of young people is, therefore, safeguarded. Young people eat a well-balanced and healthy diet.

From their starting points, young people make positive progress with their education and are actively supported by staff to attend school. Those who require additional support, get the support they need to avoid possible exclusion. The home works closely with young people's schools and educational support staff, which enables young people to achieve and in some cases make excellent progress. Young people take part in a range of enjoyable activities and they are able to pursue activities and hobbies of individual interest to them.

The accommodation provided for young people is homely in design, attractively decorated and furnished. Young people are provided with their own bedrooms, which they are free to personalise. The location of the home enables young people to have access to public transport, local parks, sports facilities and a local town shopping centre. All are within easy walking distance of the home.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Systems, policies and procedures for child protection and safeguarding are robust, and place the young people at the heart of all care practice. Staff are trained and experienced in identifying risky behaviours, dealing with allegations and educating young people to keep themselves safe. Young people say they feel safe at the home. They also recognised they do at times engage in risky behaviours, because of individual vulnerabilities that impact on their safety. Individual risk assessments

highlight risks and strategies for staff to use to protect young people.

Staff actively promote a culture of positive behaviour within the home. Young people are supported to take responsibility for their actions and measures such as restraint have not been used for some considerable time. Members of staff prefer to use their skills and competencies to encourage young people through reward systems, by listening to them and by diverting their attention to more appropriate behaviour. Young people rarely engage in disruptive or challenging behaviour and are well behaved. Instances of young people being missing from the home have decreased following the previous inspection. Young people who do go missing are protected as far as possible, although some responses are not positive. For example, on occasions young people are sanctioned, unreasonably, following their return to the home.

The home takes health and safety seriously. There are regular fire evacuation drills to show young people how to evacuate the premises safely in the event of fire. Potential hazards, such as gas and household electrical appliances are all serviced within the recommended timescales to promote health and safety within the home. Staff who work at the home are stringently vetted to ensure those employed are suitable to work with vulnerable young people. All visitors are monitored through a signing in and out system and do not have unsupervised access with young people, which further safeguards them.

Leadership and management

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

The Registered Manager is an experienced and well-respected professional who provides effective and competent leadership. Staff are motivated and actively encouraged to create new opportunities for the young people living at the home. There is a development plan in place which identifies the home's strengths and areas for improvement. A recommendation from the previous inspection has been addressed, thus ensuring young people contribute their views and sign their names in the disciplinary measure records. A requirement from the previous inspection, has been complied with, resulting in money no longer being deducted from young people for inappropriate behaviour.

The home meets the aims and objectives in their Statement of Purpose. This document is available to placing officers, families and other stakeholders and accurately reflects the current staffing arrangements and the services being provided by the home. Young people are provided with information about the services they can expect to receive. And this written information in the form of a children's guide has been produced in disk format and can be viewed by young people on a computer. This software has been translated to meet the needs of young people whose first language is not English.

There are good systems to monitor quality of care, which includes monthly visits by a designated person and young people are consulted during these visits. Staff report being well supported and supervised. Regular team meetings and training focus on

the development and progress of the young people and enable staff to ensure that there is a consistent and personalised approach to meet their individual needs.

The staffing levels are good and are appropriate to meet the needs of the young people, however, there is an imbalance of gender within the current staff team. Young people feel safe and comfortable in staff presence and were complimentary about them. Staff work hard to form close relationships with young people and to promote trust. The results are such that young people feel safe and cared for which enables them to focus positively on their journey into adult life, addressing challenges in collaboration with other agencies.

Young people's records are well structured and are held securely and confidentially. They cover all matters required in the regulations. There have been two notifications during the past inspection period. The staff and management team are well aware of the process and requirements to report significant events to appropriate authorities. No action has been identified for Ofsted as a result of the notifications received.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.