

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Steve Pearson
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The children's home is provided by a local authority and is registered to care for up to six young people with emotional or behavioural difficulties. The home aims to provide short to medium term care.

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**.

This is a well-run home. The Registered Manager, deputy manager and team of staff have a high level of knowledge, expertise and experience. The whole team fully understand the purpose of the home and they provide young people with a good sense of security and routine.

Outcomes for young people improve over the period of time they live here. One of the staff has special responsibility for promotion of education and all young people show improvements in this area. The staff continue to respond creatively to challenging behaviour and they are effective in protecting young people's safety. There are some minor shortfalls in the recording of restraints but these are not significant.

The home is in very good decorative order, clean and well-maintained. Young people have access to a range of leisure facilities and they enjoy the food. Staffing levels are good which means young people's needs are able to be met. Young people gain from good levels of continuity from a permanent team of staff and there is minimal staff turnover or sickness. The home has good capacity for continuing improvement due to effective internal and external monitoring. This includes gathering the views of young people which are then acted upon.

As a result of the current inspection there are two requirements and no recommendations.

Areas for improvement

Statutory 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 (2001)	ensure that within 24 hours of the use of any measure of restraint, a written record is made in a volume kept for the purpose which shall include a description of the measure used. In particular, this description must include an accurate and clear account of how the restraint was conducted and must not rely solely on technical language (Regulation 17B)	27/09/2013
17B (2001)	ensure that the written record of any restraint includes the signature of the person authorised to make the record. Regulation 17(B)(3)(i)	27/09/2013

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people gain a sense of identity by being supported in pursuing their own choice of leisure interests, clothing, food preferences and hobbies. They develop confidence through supportive interactions with the staff and their peers. This was summed up by one young person who said, 'The staff have lots of time for us.'

Young people develop positive health through being given support and encouragement from the team of staff. For some there have been notable successes in gaining improved health. Young people feel supported and motivated to achieve better health through the efforts of their key workers and the team as a whole.

Young people gain emotional wellbeing through regular contact with their family and friends. A social worker said, 'Every effort is made to maintain positive links with families if this is part of the plan.'

Young people also make good progress in their educational development. This was summed up by one young person who said, 'I feel I am doing better in education now compared to before I lived here.' Several young people are awaiting results from GCSE exams and school attendance levels are very good.

They gain useful skills and knowledge which will be helpful when they are older and living independently. For example, one young person said, 'The staff teach us how to cook meals and budget our money. We've also got an independence flat upstairs.'

Quality of care

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

Young people have a full say in how the home is run and in their own care plans. Each of them has a key worker who coordinates their care and oversees their personal development. The Registered Manager and staff are proactive in seeking the views of young people. They hold regular house meetings which are recorded and they have regular one-to-one discussions with them. Young people know how to make a formal complaint although none have been made since the previous inspection.

Generally speaking, levels of risk-taking and offending behaviour are not significant. Young people behave appropriately and get on with each other. This was summed up by one young person who said, 'I get on with everyone but I'd prefer to be in a smaller home.' Young people also confirmed that sanctions are fair and restraints are only occasional and carried out safely.

The staff are effective in enabling young people to be healthy. One of them has special responsibility for coordinating the promotion of health. There are effective working relationships with a variety of relevant agencies. For example, young people receive expert support to help them reduce their use of drugs and alcohol and another agency supports them to achieve positive emotional health. They receive annual medical assessments and regular support from a nurse with responsibility for looked after children. This includes effective support to help with smoking cessation.

The home is very effective in helping young people to succeed in education. A member of staff has special responsibility for promoting and organising education and this role is key to the quality of care provided. All of the five young people who completed a survey said, 'The staff make sure I go to school or college and help me with my school work.'

The premises of the home are very well-maintained, clean and comfortable. Externally, young people help grow vegetables which are then used in the home's meals. Young people said, 'I like my bedroom as it's my own space and I have everything I need. I can lock it with my own bedroom key if I want to.'

The needs of young people are set out in residential placement plans. The management of the home are aware of improvements that can be made to ensure these are more personalised to individual young people.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

The staff are effective in promoting positive behaviour. This was summed up by a social worker who said in their survey, 'The children have come from difficult situations and their behaviour can be very challenging. Staff seem to do their utmost

to be respectful and empower young people with appropriate choices and behaviour.' The staff use incentives to reward success and sanctions as a consequence of unacceptable behaviour. Restraints are rare although there are some minor shortfalls in their recording which means that accountability is not fully robust.

Young people spoken with at the inspection and in their surveys said, 'I feel safe.' At the inspection they all said that they had not experienced any bullying at the home.

The staff are confident in how to promote young people's safety and they receive regular training in child protection. The pattern of young people going missing is variable. After a significant reduction over several months, there has been an increase in the summer holidays. However the staff put a lot of energy into making young people aware of the risks and they do all they can to search for them if they fail to return on time. The Registered Manager also monitors these occasions carefully and they meet with a multi-agency group each month to discuss any concerns.

The premises are safe. Professional technicians regularly service the electrical equipment, gas appliances and equipment for preventing, detecting and extinguishing fires. The staff assess the hazards that may affect each young person. They then make a record of what it is necessary to do to reduce any risk of harm.

Appropriate recruitment arrangements are in place which help to ensure that staff employed to work with children are suitable.

Leadership and management

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

At the previous inspection Ofsted judged that the home was making good progress and made no requirements or recommendations.

The home has maintained the high quality of care provision. Management arrangements have been firmed up by the appointment of a permanent deputy manager who is also now studying for their level 5 qualification in residential care management. Other care staff are also taking part in this course to develop their knowledge and skills at a higher level. Overall, the training plan for all the staff has been re-designed and is now tailor-made to meet the needs of staff working in residential care. The management training has also been improved to ensure it is fit for purpose. Of the 13 staff who completed a survey, all of them agreed that their training helped them in their day to day care of young people. Nearly all of the staff team are appropriately qualified.

The home has a clear annual development plan which comprehensively addresses how the quality of care is to be maintained and improved over the coming 12 months. The Registered Manager monitors the quality of care on a monthly basis. They identify any causes for concern and create an action plan to address shortfalls. In line with legislation, an external person also visits the home once a month to

assess the quality of care. They also make recommendations when necessary and the Registered Manager and staff act on these appropriately.

Staffing levels are good and all positions are filled by permanent people. Temporary staff who are known to the young people fill vacancies caused by sickness or holidays. The quality of staffing was summed up by one young person who said, 'We always have enough staff on duty. They are nice and they listen to us and have time for us.'

Records are clear and up to date. Key workers take special responsibility for keeping care plans up to date and these are checked in monthly supervision. The staff feel well-supported by the management team and benefit from monthly supervision, annual appraisals and regular staff meetings. One member of staff summed this up in their survey saying, 'Having regular supervision keeps me focused and keeps me motivated.'

In line with legislation, the home informs Ofsted quickly if any significant events occur. This helps the regulator to be aware of significant events and how the home is responding to them.

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* and the evaluation schedule for the inspection of children's homes.