

## Inspection report for children's home

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| <b>Inspection date</b>         | 29/09/2011      |
| <b>Inspector</b>               | Stephen Trainor |
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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

A local authority operates this children's home. This service is registered for up to six young people of either gender, aged between 11 and 17 years of age. The home cares for young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

### Overall effectiveness

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

All the young people receive a high standard of care and this means they commit to their placements, work hard, achieve and develop to reach their potential. Individuals are clear about the arrangements for them, are aware of plans and programmes, and make good progress both socially and educationally. Placements are stable and young people take responsibility for their behaviour.

Relationships between young people and between staff and young people are excellent and each young person provides their full co-operation. All the young people state that they feel safe while living at the home. There is excellent safeguarding afforded to residents from clear and agreed strategies and protocols that staff implement.

Young people's efforts are rewarded and clear incentives help to change behaviours. They are cared for by a very experienced, competent, fully qualified and highly motivated team of staff. Staff require some training to enhance their skills in order to remain fully up-to-date with professional and legal developments following extensive changes to inspection frameworks. The promotion of young people's education, health and well-being are excellent. Recreational interests are supported well and holidays are planned. Young people gain important life skills from the start of their placement and develop self-knowledge, self-help skills and improve their self-esteem for the time they leave the home. Young people show excellent interpersonal skills and tremendous confidence.

The young people are extremely relaxed within their home. The home's environment is very supportive and underpinned by defined boundaries. Young people's views are consistently gathered and these influence the home's operation and future direction. The home's aims and objectives are being fulfilled but there are some minor changes needed to a few management systems. The views of all partners' are not yet being gathered to help shape future services and promote continuous improvement at the home. Regulation 33 reports do not contain good consultation information and this can restrict weaknesses from being identified.

### Areas for improvement

## Recommendations

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

- ensure clear and effective procedures are in place for monitoring and controlling the activities of the home, specifically, establish systems and records that show views are being sought and used to promote continuous improvement and development (NMS 21.1)
- ensure staff receive high quality learning and development training to enhance their individual skills, in particular, support to better understand the new inspection framework and new national minimum standards. (NMS 18.1)

## Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people experience stable placements and make progress in many areas, including their social presentation, self-awareness and taking responsibility for their behaviour. As a result young people develop and mature. The young people are extremely confident in their placements.

Young people achieve personal goals and this helps them to develop a better understanding and appreciation of their personal circumstances. One young person, reflecting on the time spent at the home, summarised their thoughts, 'If you're bad you get nothing, if you're good you get what you want.' It is clear that young people can motivate themselves, especially to attend meetings where they express their views with some confidence. The young people have a growing optimism about their futures, stating that they are happy living at the home.

Young people living at the home are treated fairly and staff practice is capable of supporting their individual needs. A social work manager commented, 'Staff have the skills, motivation and abilities to form very positive working relationships with young people and sustain them.' Young people gain tremendous benefits from high levels of emotional support they receive.

Each young person's education potential is supported by proactive staff practice. There are opportunities for the young people to attend different educational placements including local colleges, schools and specials schools where achievements improve self-confidence and future prospects. A social worker commented, 'The majority of young people have good to outstanding outcomes; these outcomes need to be measured against the point at where the young person was at when they were placed at the home.' Attendance since the start of the new term is excellent.

Young people enjoy good health and mainly follow a healthy lifestyle. They take responsibility for their health and make clear links between diet and exercise.

Regular activities such as swimming, BMX, skateboarding, gym, walks and dancing ensure they remain physically active. All young people are familiar with their health arrangements, are aware of the contents of their health plans and have the skills to organise their own appointments with health professionals.

Young people are well prepared for the transition to independence and adult life. Pathway and after care plans are introduced at the correct age and stage of placement. Young people do gain many competencies and life skills through good quality experiences provided by in-house independence and social skills training programmes. They have particular interests in food preparation and they are adept around the kitchen. Programmes encourage good social presentation skills which are clearly identifiable in how young people conduct themselves at the home and in the surrounding community.

### **Quality of care**

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

Young people enjoy excellent relationships with staff which enable them to engage positively and make good choices, for example, keeping themselves safe and getting the best from their education placements. Staff are highly skilled and show great insight and understanding of young people's needs. As a result young people appreciate and value the efforts of staff and work closely with them to plan their futures. Young people are confident to express their views in their statutory reviews. Staff practice supports young people to maximise their contributions. Individual plans are of a high quality reflecting young people's needs and charting their progress. An independent reviewing officer commented, 'Interaction with this agency was outstanding', and, 'I have always been impressed by the commitment and professional approach by staff at the home, flexible and sensitive to the young people's needs.'

Young people make big improvements in their behaviour and all are relaxed, happy and confident in their placements. Equality and diversity are well established within the culture and ethos of the home and this means there are many opportunities to develop self-knowledge, self-help skills and improve their self-esteem. Partnership arrangements are effective, and communication between staff, young people and their parents, social workers and other professionals is coordinated extremely well. The overall atmosphere and provision of care is rated as outstanding by many partners. A social services team manager is extremely complimentary commenting that staff have, 'Ability to work towards a care plan and work creatively.'

Developing educational potential forms a clear part of the home's philosophy of care. Care staff emphasise the importance of gaining a good education and encourage school attendance. Continuous learning and development opportunities are presented. Young people are enthusiastic about their education and have aspirations to complete GCSE examinations and college courses. This is a tremendous achievement considering many of them have had limited or disjointed education experiences in the past.

The young people are consulted with and fully involved in life at the home. They make a clear contribution to the development of services. Expressed opinion and feedback are welcomed. Young people understand how to make a complaint. A guide covers complaints, with information, guidance and contact details of agencies such as Ofsted, children's rights and the Children's Rights Director. Young people can differentiate between grumbles and serious complaints. Positively young people are developing their skills by learning to sort out minor matters between themselves through discussion or by raising matters during in-house meetings. The group is supportive, works very well together, and values individual differences.

Healthy lifestyles are promoted. The key worker role delivers health promotion work covering matters such as relationships, expressing emotions and feelings and this helps to develop skills to manage and change behaviours.

Medication is stored safely, and records are maintained on the administration of medication, including, prescribed and non-prescription medication. There are clear policies and procedural guidance and these are followed in practice. All staff receive suitable training to support health and well-being and this maintains the quality of care being provided. There are good collaborative links with many different health professionals and agencies, and this allows helpful guidance and support to be provided when young people are most in need.

Staff engage young people in a range of activities and planned holidays to develop individual potential and enhance learning opportunities. Staff identify individual interests and have been successful in supporting young people's aspirations. A suitable budget enables young people to pursue their hobbies and interests. A good balance between organised activities and young people's free time supports their growing independence.

### **Safeguarding children and young people**

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

Young people confirm that they are safe living at the home. They learn to accept responsibility for their behaviour, show initiative and understand how they contribute to the home's operation. Young people develop skills that enable them to differentiate their behaviour according to the different settings and situations they find themselves in. Young people's personalities prosper and progress is made.

Young people say that bullying is not an issue of concern to them and confirm that staff do not tolerate any form of bullying. They have confidence that staff will respond to any bullying that may occur. There is very good interaction and sensible discussion around difference allowing members of the peer group to maintain a positive self-view. All young people understand the many forms that bullying can take and are equally clear about what to do if they have any concerns.

Young people have suitable safeguarding and complaints information, are aware of the content of this information and acknowledge that they will not suffer any recrimination if complaints and grumbles are made. Complaints made by young people are reported transparently and investigated. Policy and procedural guidance is consistent with that of the local safeguarding team's protocols. Staff receive regular training to update their knowledge and have a good understanding of safeguarding policies, procedures and actions they should take, if an incident arises.

Systems for dealing with young people who go missing from home are well established and a clear protocol is set out. Risk assessments take account of a young person's potential to go missing. Excellent working relationships with the local police coordinator support safeguarding. Ongoing liaison means that potential conflicts between the home's management and police are being ironed out during face-to-face meetings. Recent strategies had been successful in reducing the volume of reports of children missing from care. Young people always have an opportunity to reflect on incidents they are involved in. There is a proactive response in arranging return interviews to identify any potential safeguarding concerns.

Staff uphold children's rights. Young people respond very well to praise and there is good use of positive reinforcement. Respectful communication and an excellent atmosphere were maintained throughout the inspection. Agreed and established strategies encourage each young person to take responsibility for their behaviour. Interventions are reported transparently and monitoring of the service and its records allows suitable safeguarding to be afforded. Staff are clear that physical intervention is very much a last resort and are more comfortable using the positive relationships built up with young people to diffuse difficult situations. All staff receive regular and refresher training in positive handling techniques.

Young people benefit from a permanent, experienced and stable staff team. Recruitment practice is robust ensuring only suitable people work with young people. Equally good practice ensures the vetting of visitors to safeguard young people. No concerns were outlined with the home's recruitment procedures.

Health and safety are managed well ensuring young people and staff remain safe. Regular servicing of equipment and routine safety checks maintain a safe environment. Young people know what to do in the case of an emergency and can exit the home safely. Staff implement a range of risk assessments to identify and minimise hazards. There is a comprehensive audit of all health and safety matters carried out on an annual basis.

## **Leadership and management**

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

Young people develop meaningful and lasting attachments from the supportive management culture and the hard work of the staff. Young people are gaining tremendous benefits for their placement experience being provided by a highly motivated team of staff who have skill sets that enable high quality care to be

provided. It is a strong, child-focused service that is conducive to young people developing their potential. This service is managed by an experienced and fully qualified manager. A social work team manager commented, 'On the whole communication is excellent with communication around significant issues being effective.' A fieldwork support officer commented, 'Outstanding service, staff are very attentive and professional.' Senior reviewing officer, 'I have always been met with a well prepared and professional team of people.'

There is a clear vision for how the home should operate. Some practice adjustments are being made in line with new inspection framework, the evaluation schedule, and new national minimum standards. To date, little training had been provided on the new inspection framework. All levels of staff can influence and shape the service with their ideas and initiatives. Practice is continually developed by a management team that is perceptive in identifying the home's strengths and the areas where it could perform better. An accurate verbal self-assessment of the service was outlined by the Registered Manager. Management showed the capacity to improve by addressing four recommendations made at the previous inspection.

The views of the young people are not being captured clearly during visits made to the home under the requirements of Regulation 33 and 34. Information contained within these reports still manages to provide a snapshot in time on what it is like to live at the home. Realistic and challenging targets are outlined within the home's development plan. Evaluation of this plan will contribute to monitoring and controlling the home's activities.

Individuals' needs, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are being met. The young people have full confidence in their staff and know who is responsible for them at all times of the day and night. Staffing levels are maintained and a good gender balance is evident within the team.

Records at this home show good clarity in how staff are managed. Detailed induction and foundation training are provided. Staff confirm that supervision is taking place. All staff have relevant qualifications with access to National Vocational Qualifications at level 3 and 4 and new diploma training being managed well. Systems for staff personal development and appraisal are established.

Young people's placements are stable and the home's service history shows a good record in compliance. There is a good system in place to notify persons and appropriate authorities of the occurrence of significant events and information shows what action is being taken to prevent future occurrences.

Staff practice is supported by comprehensive written guidance, policies and procedures. Information is easy to access and guidance ensures a consistent response to meeting young people's presenting needs. The home's Statement of Purpose provides information in accordance with regulations. The ethos and working practices of the home clearly meets aims and objectives and this means young people acquire an appreciation of and respect for their own and other cultures. Good outcomes are being secured.

Equality and diversity practice is **outstanding**.