

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Robert Curr
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This is a local authority children's home, which provides care and accommodation for up to five young people from 11 to 15 years with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

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**.

Young people benefit from good quality care from a strong, stable, confident and experienced staff team who value and respect them. At the previous full inspection the young people were a long-term settled group. However, some young people have only recently moved into the home and are not engaging as successfully as others. Because of this, outcomes for young people are judged as adequate.

Some young people have formed positive attachments with staff and all are making progress from their starting points. Staff are good at supporting young people to prepare for independence. However, young people are not engaging in this so this is not helping them develop life skills for the future.

Young people say that they feel safe. They can identify adults to approach with any concerns or complaints about any aspect of their care, safety and welfare. Some young people present behaviour management challenges but these reduce over time as they develop strong relationships with the staff team. As a result, restraint is rarely used in the home. Staff reward good behaviour; in particular, they recognise young people's diverse achievements.

Despite encouragement from staff, not all young people are involved in education or training and this impacts negatively on their future life chances. The staff's ability to meet young people's cultural and personal identity needs is a strong feature of childcare practice at this home.

The home operates with an enthusiastic Registered Manager. This results in a

positive impact on the leadership, management, and accountability. Pathway planning issues are not fully resolved to ensure that eligible young people are well supported in developing their skills for adult life.

As a result of this inspection, areas for improvement are to continue the on-going promotion of young people's well-being and to capture young people's views at regulation 33 visits about the quality of care offered to them.

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
33 (2001)	interview with their consent and in private, such of the children, their parents, relatives and persons working at the home, as appears necessary in order to form an opinion of the standard of care provided in the home and supply a copy of the report to HMCI within stipulated timescales. (Regulation 33 (4)(a),(5)(a))	31/12/2012

Recommendations

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

- ensure children's health and skills for adulthood continue to be developed and promoted in accordance with their placement plan. (NMS 6)
- work closely with the authority responsible for the child's care so that those not participating in education, employment or training are supported and enabled to resume full time education (Volume 5 Statutory guidance, para 2.119)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

All young people are making adequate progress to improve their life chances. Some young people develop confidence, emotional resilience, specific skills and coping mechanisms that will help to sustain them in the future.

Young people's health needs are met to a satisfactory standard. They are actively encouraged to live a healthy lifestyle, including healthy eating and exercise. Young

people are discouraged from smoking. Good access to the specialist children's nurse provides young people with information and guidance about smoking cessation. The nurse ensures that young people's assessed health needs are identified. Although staff provide appropriate support, young people are choosing not to fully recognise the immediate and long-term risks of poor diet and smoking. However, they attend their health appointments with their doctors, dentists and opticians. Young people who need specific emotional and psychological support engage with, and benefit from, these services. They make informed choices through good advice and support from staff and professionals.

Despite encouragement from staff, not all young people consistently attend education, training or employment. They do not demonstrate motivation and determination to succeed. Where young people have expressed a desire to further their learning, this has been accessed. Although not all young people achieve good exam results, they have made good educational progress from their starting points at the beginning of this term. Their achievements are recognised, highly praised and celebrated.

Young people's social inclusion in the community is not strong. Interaction with the local community and neighbouring young people has been negative recently. Staff are liaising with the local community police to support young people and staff to ensure that incidents of anti-social behaviour are minimised.

Young people benefit from appropriate contact with their families, friends and people who are important to them. Staff facilitate contact and these relationships promote young people's identity and sense of belonging.

Current pathway planning arrangements have not been fully formalised due to young people only just reaching an eligible age. Young people are not engaging in the support offered to budget, shop, cook and launder their clothes. Although young people are expected to maintain their rooms, staff resort to ensuring their rooms are clean and tidy.

Quality of care

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

Young people enjoy some excellent relationships with staff, promoting mutual respect, trust and appropriate attachments. Young people also relate well with each other most of the time. Staff are child-focused. They are familiar with young people's personalities and work to their strengths. Young people discuss a range of matters with staff, particularly issues of concern. Staff act on any concerns. They represent positive adult role models and engage well with young people, providing support and guidance on issues that will enable them to make informed decisions. These relationships encourage appropriate, socially acceptable behaviours. One young person said that the staff are, 'good to them'.

Young people's views, wishes and feelings are actively sought and influence the

running of the home. Young people contribute to their own meetings by arranging the agenda and taking the minutes. These forums enable all young people to have their say. Agenda items include holidays and trips away, management arrangements and purchasing items for the home. The manager responds to the young people's meetings and makes himself accessible to them. One young person considering moving to the home has limited English and has had access to a familiar interpreter. Staff are currently identifying various methods of communication as this will aid the transition. This is helping the young person understand what to expect from living in the home. Young people are involved in their statutory reviews and contribute to them. This promotes young people's confidence and self-determination. Key workers are compatible with the young people and take their role seriously, ensuring they support and monitor young people's progress.

No complaints have been made for some time. Young people know how to complain. However, they will usually resolve issues through discussion and negotiation. Young people benefit from good external contacts, such as their independent reviewing officers and a children's advocacy service.

Young people are cared for in line with their placement plans, which are regularly reviewed and monitored. One independent reviewing officer says that a young person at the home is making, 'significant progress' and is, 'improving in many areas'. Staff promote young people's personal identity and cultural needs very well. Young people are cared for in a manner which enables them to celebrate their individuality.

Good behaviour management strategies and child-focused practices support and reward positive behaviour.

Staff endeavour to meet the physical, emotional and psychological health needs of young people. Young people have good individual health plans in place. They attend their health appointments with staff support. Their health needs are monitored and reviewed. Young people who may have experienced trauma and loss, have good access to mental health services. The outcomes for young people engaged in these services have positively enhanced their lives. Young people are well informed about issues related to their health, such as sexual health, smoking and healthy eating.

Staff have high aspirations for the young people. They continually work with other agencies and the local authority to ensure that young people are not disadvantaged.

Young people live in a homely environment which provides suitable accommodation for those who are preparing for independence. The home is furnished, decorated and maintained to a high standard, particularly the communal areas. Young people have keys to their rooms so that they can keep their belongings safe and be responsible for their possessions. Young people personalise their rooms to suit their individuality. Staff ensure that the home is well kept and involve the young people where possible. This teaches young people useful skills which may benefit them in the future.

The home provides a good base for young people to engage in activities and enables

accessible travel to neighbouring towns and cities.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people say they feel safe. All aspects of staff practice promote young people's safety and well-being. For example, staff talk to young people about keeping themselves safe and maintain contact with young people on their mobile phones when they are away from home. They monitor friendships to ensure that they are genuine, in particular with young people who are at risk of child sexual exploitation. Staff are good at monitoring safety without being overly intrusive. Positive relationships between young people, staff and people outside the home ensure that young people can express their concerns to an appropriate adult.

All safeguarding policies and protocols provide robust and sufficient protection to young people who continue to take risk. This means that young people are afforded the opportunity to make full disclosures to appropriately trained independent professionals. Involving agencies, such as the police and independent reviewing officers in safeguarding decisions is routinely considered so young people always benefit from a multi-professional approach to safeguarding concerns. Key professionals are promptly informed about changes to safeguarding agreements, so they can make timely representation, if concerned. This is good practice. It informs young people that their allegations are taken seriously and builds their self-esteem.

Young people do not report bullying to be an issue at the home. Young people are supported to behave appropriately. Their behaviour rarely warrants the need for restraint or physical intervention. Although staff say that young people can present behaviour management issues, they comment fondly about young people and demonstrate practices which show that young people are valued. Most young people present as well mannered, pleasant individuals who know how to behave in a range of social settings.

Visitors to the home are checked to ensure their positive identity, so that young people are protected from people who may pose a risk to them.

Although young people have been reported missing from the home, there is an up-to-date agreed protocol to promote the safety and welfare of young people who go missing from care. Unauthorised absences are closely monitored. Young people say that if they return home late, staff do not tell them off, but remind them of their agreed coming in times. Comments from social workers state that, 'consistent staff support results in fewer unauthorised absences'.

Regular health and safety checks on fire prevention equipment, gas, electricity checks, and regular health and safety audits promote a physically safe environment for young people to live in. Up-to-date risk assessments reflect young people's behaviour and the measures in place to minimise risk. Some young people continue to engage in risky behaviours, such as smoking in bedrooms and this presents a

health and safety concern. The home is addressing this issue and it is included in individual risk assessments.

Leadership and management

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

The home is efficiently and conscientiously managed. A variety of arrangements exist for monitoring the quality of care by the strong management team. The experienced Registered Manager has positive relationships with the young people in his care. The manager maintains a close day-to-day overview of each young person individually, alongside the general running of the home. Any shortfalls are promptly identified and addressed. As a result, young people's progress is monitored and the demonstrable differences the home has, or has not made to young people's outcomes are identified and recorded. This supports care planning, while contributing to young people's experience of being valued.

A Statement of Purpose clearly outlines the aims and objectives of the home. In addition, young people receive information in their individual welcome booklet. This clearly informs them about the home and the care that is to be provided. As a result, young people are appropriately placed thereby enhancing their life experience.

No complaints have arisen since the last inspection. Effective communication between the home, parents and social workers ensures that they feel confident that their concerns will be heard and acted upon. Young people's welfare, well-being and safety are promoted by this practice.

The manager actively monitors the quality of care provided under Regulation 34, Schedule 6 and uses the information gathered positively to further benefit young people in the home. Independent visits are also undertaken monthly and the frequency of visits meets the standard. Although reports make clear recommendations there is no evidence that young people or their relatives are consulted regularly as part of these visits and the regulation 33 reports do not contain their views. Therefore it is not clear whether young people can actively contribute about the quality of their care during independent visits. These reports are not sent to Ofsted in a timely fashion. This is an administrative issue, with no impact on young people's outcomes. Young people are protected by multi-agency decision making as the manager communicates with and notifies agencies, including Ofsted, of any significant incidents. Records are securely kept and diligently maintained.

Young people benefit from good staffing levels and the care and attention they receive from the well-supported and committed staff team.

All staff members either hold or are enrolled on the National Vocational Qualification at level 3, diploma course. Staff members report that they receive strong peer and management support and benefit from a good, formal supervision process. Social workers report that the key worker system ensures that young people receive, 'consistent continuity of care'.

The manager's motivation is driving forward the continuous improvement. This level of motivation ensures young people are provided with a safe, caring and stimulating environment.

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 children's homes.