

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Jacqueline Malcolm
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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 provides care and accommodation for up to five young people from eleven years and 15 years with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Overall effectiveness

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

Young people are cared for by well-trained, qualified and experienced staff in a safe, well-managed home. Their diverse needs are actively promoted and celebrated. Young people are supported to take advantage of the opportunities available to them. Young people who have lived at the home for some years are developing into confident, independent individuals who are aware of their rights and responsibilities. Young people who have recently moved into the home are welcomed and plans are in place to meet their needs. This includes their health promotion, education, leisure activities and preparations for independence.

Young people say that they like living in the home and feel safe. This is of particular importance because previous bullying behaviour in the home and community made young people feel unsafe and vulnerable. This is testament to the positive action taken by the home and community police to resolve the issue. Professionals consulted are satisfied with the standard of care at the home and express no concerns. Strong leadership, management and rigorous internal and external management processes ensure young people get the best opportunities to improve their life chances.

Areas for development relate to actively discouraging young people from smoking and making sure that the children's guide contains information about how young people can contact the Children's Rights Director, Ofsted if they wish to raise a concern with inspectors, and how to secure access to an independent advocate.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure all children's physical, emotional and social development needs are further promoted. In particular, in relation to discouraging young people from smoking (NMS 6)
- ensure the children's guide includes a summary of what the home sets out to do

for children, how they can find out their rights, how a child can contact their IRO, the Children's Rights Director, Ofsted if they wish to raise a concern with inspectors, and how to secure access to an independent advocate. (NMS 13.5)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people benefit from good support and encouragement from staff. Activities, such as key work sessions, group meetings and informal discussions increase young people's sense of stability, emotional resilience and help them gain an improved understanding of their histories and develop their future plans. Young people are actively encouraged to maintain positive contact with family and significant people in their lives. They are helped by staff who facilitate approved contact and ensure good support to help young people maintain contact either through visits or by telephone.

Young people's health is promoted at the start of their placement. All young people are registered with key health professionals. They are well supported to attend appointments. Additional services are provided to meet young people's needs arising from their physical, emotional and psychological conditions. Positive working relationships between staff and the looked after children's nurse ensure that as much information as possible is obtained about young people's health, including up to date immunisations. Good links with the sexual health and drugs teams and training in these areas ensure that young people can access information and get practical advice. Young people are aware about the importance of healthy lifestyles because they are well informed by staff and health professionals. However, not all young people are actively discouraged from smoking. This does not fully ensure the overall promotion of their good health.

Young people benefit from attention that provides them with a high value on their education. Staff take proactive steps to ensure that young people have good school attendance and achieve in these settings. Young people have benefited from positive educational outcomes in relation to their starting points. The home has a good track record of engaging young people into education who may have struggled in the past. This promotes their future training and employment prospects. For some young people, it is early days to see the impact of their education attendance and achievement because they are new to the home. However, staff have a firm commitment to ensuring progress in this area.

Young people are actively encouraged to take ownership of their independence skills, irrespective of their age and ability. Young people who are involved in planning for independence have pathway plans. Young people are good at travelling independently in the community, budgeting, shopping, preparing and cooking meals, maintaining good self hygiene levels and keeping their environment clean and tidy. This may be challenging for some young people. However, they are well supported by staff who continue to provide support and encouragement.

Quality of care

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

Young people benefit from a quality of care that supports them to aspire in all aspects of their life. Young people enjoy a positive connection with staff, which nurtures open and honest discussions, keeping young people's needs central to the planning and review of their care. Young people are involved in their care plans. Their assessed needs are identified and well met. Positively, young people who previously expressed no interest in contributing to their plans are now actively engaged and have a better understanding of them. Professionals comment that the quality of care provided by the home is 'absolutely fantastic' and say that they have a good partnership with the home.

Appropriate behaviours are explained to young people when they move into the home. This helps young people understand the home's expectations and boundaries. Positive handling plans support young people's changing needs and the home has a positive track record in relation to caring for young people who present with challenging behaviours. Positive incentives are effective for a number of young people who respond well and are largely compliant. This has led to modified behaviours noted over time, minimal sanctions and no physical interventions. The general view from young people is that the home is a good place to live and they generally like the staff.

Young people know how to complain. They are taken seriously and are appropriately dealt with. Young people demonstrate satisfaction with the outcome of complaints. Effective action is taken to ensure more serious complaints motivated by discriminatory language are dealt with, with police support as required. This ensures that young people are aware about the serious impact that their behaviour may have on others and their future plans. Compliments made by other professionals acknowledge the positive care that young people receive.

Young people are regularly consulted about their wishes and feelings and the way the home is run in a meaningful and constructive manner. Young people are spoken to and feel listened to. For example, young people's meetings, key work sessions and informal discussions provide young people with opportunities to express their views and inform the way the home is run and their care. Young people are actively involved in a range of activities that promote their social inclusion and help them develop friendships and pursuits in the community. For example, this includes skating, trampoline, holidays abroad, skiing, swimming. Activities in the home are also promoted and provide young people with opportunities to further develop relationships with staff and each other.

Young people's health and well-being is protected when they are prescribed medication. Robust monitoring of medication is undertaken internally and externally when the pharmacist visits to audit young people's medication and advise staff. Recommendations made as a result of the visits are promptly followed up by the home.

Young people live in a clean home that is well decorated, furnished and maintained to an attractive standard. Young people confirm they have been involved in the decoration of the communal areas and can personalise their bedrooms. Young people new to the home are quickly involved in choosing furniture and fixtures. This makes young people feel valued and treated as individuals with their own sense of style.

Young people say that, although they like their environment, not all like the home's location and until recently did not feel safe. This was due to threats and attacks made by people in the area towards young people and staff. This issue has since been resolved following discussions between the local police and the home and young people report no further concerns.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people's benefit from care that actively promotes their safety and welfare. Staff trained in safeguarding young people are acutely aware about the importance of keeping young people safe and protected both in the home and community. They know what to do in the event of a safeguarding concern and risk manage each young person depending on their level of need. This has resulted in some excellent outcomes for young people. They ensure that proactive measures are taken to protect young people in the same way that a good parent would provide for their child. For example, staff regularly contact young people on their mobile phones to ensure they are safe and well. If young people are out late and cannot get home, staff arrange suitable transport to ensure their safe return home. Regular discussions with young people take place that cover safe care issues and young people benefit from positive relationships with safeguarding agencies and the local police. This provides effective protection for young people who may otherwise be placed at significant harm due to their risky, high profile behaviours. This protection enhances their feelings of safety and well-being. Young people confirm that they feel safe and raise no concerns about their care and treatment.

Young people know who they can talk to if they have concerns about their safety. They report that bullying and intimidation is no longer an issue. This is credited to the work staff do with young people on bullying and demonstrates the clear and effective strategies used to eliminate this behaviour and create a safer and happier home environment.

Young people have gone missing from the home in high numbers and in some instances, for several consecutive days. Staff make positive efforts to contact and encourage young people to return home. They work effectively with other agencies, in particular safeguarding agencies and the police, with whom they have forged good relationships. Recently the number of times that young people have been reported missing has significantly reduced. Staff understand and implement strategies to manage individual behaviours and follow clear, measurable risk management plans.

Staff training incorporates managing young people's behaviours and positive relationships have been developed over time. Restraint has not been used for a significant period. Young people say that they have not been restrained. One said, 'I have never been restrained' while living at this home.

Young people live in a safe environment. They are protected by robust recruitment practices that ensure suitable staff are appointed to care for them. No new staff have been recruited to the home in nearly two years, providing high levels of consistency for young people. Regular checks on gas, electrical, fire safety systems and health and safety risk assessments, and visits from fire and health and safety professionals ensure risk reduction to young people, staff and visitors.

Leadership and management

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

Young people live in a very well-managed home that benefits from a consistent and highly stable team of qualified and experienced staff. Staff are well motivated; child centred and work effectively to ensure positive outcomes for young people from their starting points. This includes the promotion of anti-discriminatory practices, raising young people's awareness with respect to equality and diversity issues. The home is well resourced and staff are sufficient in numbers to meet young people's changing needs. Staff recognise the diverse and complex challenges presented by young people and some of the turbulence experienced has been met in a very supportive, consistent and caring manner. Professionals say that they have confidence in the care provided to young people. One professional said 'staff need to keep up the good work.'

Young people live in a home that meets the aims of the Statement of Purpose. Young people are provided with a copy of the children's guide when they move into the home. However, they are not informed in the guide about how they can contact the Children's Rights Director, Ofsted if they wish to raise a concern with inspectors, and how to secure access to an independent advocate. There is, however, no impact of this area for improvement on outcomes for young people.

Young people are extremely well cared for by regularly supervised and appraised staff. They are clear about their roles, responsibilities and levels of accountability. Effective training opportunities, including refresher training and training relevant to the care delivered to young people, ensure staff are up to date with current practices. For example, this includes safeguarding, drugs, sexual exploitation and changes to legislation. The staff team are extremely supportive of each other and have sustained the strong communication mechanisms previously in place. This ensures they are up to date with the young people's activities. Regular staff meetings, daily handovers and an open-door management style and a team day are examples of strong practices that provide a transparent working environment and which promotes young people's safety and welfare.

Robust, targeted, effective management overview and monitoring processes ensure

the best possible outcomes for young people. The management team and staff are highly committed to raising standards and have a number of internal measures to ensure this happens. This includes Regulation 34 management monitoring, identifying strengths and areas for improvement. Staff have delegated areas of responsibility and are accountable. The home's written development plan is inclusive of the whole staff team. It includes a number of areas recognising and celebrating success in the team, areas for development and explores how the team can better evidence their practices. External monitoring visits undertaken by the Regulation 33 visitor and thematic visits undertaken by a senior manager ensures further rigour of the quality of service delivered to young people. The management team is clearly aware about their strengths and areas for development and continue to drive improvement in the home. The home has met the two good practice recommendations made at the last inspection. Young people benefit from up-to-date pathway plans and the issues of bullying have been addressed and continue to be countered.

Young people's files provide a good detail of their progress and development.

Equality and diversity practice is **outstanding**.