

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Judith Longden
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home is operated by a local authority and provides medium- to long-term care for up to six young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties. There is a flat to enable young people to acquire independence skills.

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 make good progress in all aspects of their welfare and development. They are achieving good outcomes in their education, healthy lifestyles, independence skills and the development of confidence and self-esteem. They receive good quality care that is well planned and based on the individual needs of the young person. Staff are committed to providing a high standard of care. Young people have strong, positive relationships with staff and each other. Behaviour is well managed and continues to improve. Young people feel safe and are kept safe. Staff have a good understanding of safe working practice. The management of the home is strong, areas of weakness have been tackled and the home continues to improve. There are no breaches of regulation or failures to meet national minimum standards.

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people make good progress in achieving positive outcomes in all areas. They are supported to understand their backgrounds and why they are in care. A social worker said a young person had 'made improvements since being at the home'. Young people are encouraged to discuss their emotions and work on appropriate methods to deal with their feelings. As a result young people develop a positive self-view and improve their confidence. They are able to identify positive relationships and form and sustain appropriate attachments.

Young people benefit from a diet that is healthy, balanced and varied. Food is freshly

prepared and home cooked. Young people are encouraged to help prepare and cook meals. This means they learn practical skills in cooking and safe storage of food. They also learn how to make meals from fresh ingredients rather than using pre-packed convenience foods. A variety of leisure activities such as football and aqua aerobics promote active and healthy lifestyles for young people. Staff work with young people to understand the risks associated with smoking, alcohol and drugs. Key work sessions are utilised to discuss health issues such as sexual health, self-harm and emotional well-being. As a result young people understand the importance of a holistic healthy lifestyle and take responsibility for their own health.

Young people enjoy a range of activities including golf, bowling, fishing and gardening. They are encouraged to participate in new activities and as a result develop skills and confidence. Young people are supported to establish friendships with their peers and members of their community. They are assisted to attend local religious centres. This supports their understanding of their cultural background and personal identity.

Young people are achieving good attendance and attainments in their education. One young person has achieved 100% attendance since coming to the home and has achieved outstanding results in their examinations. All young people have identified educational opportunities for the start of the new academic year. Young people's achievements are proudly recorded and displayed, this includes academic achievement and success in areas such as bravery, behaviour and extra-curricular activities such as football tournaments. This promotes young people's confidence and self-esteem and encourages them to achieve their educational potential.

Young people benefit from improved contact arrangements with their parents, family and friends. Staff communicate well with families and engage them in decision making about their child's care. A social worker said the home has 'facilitated contact and promoted relationship with parent'. Where contact arrangements change this is explained to young people.

Young people participate in an independence training programme that is tailored to meet their needs. They learn practical skills such as money management and cooking and also learn important life skills such as establishing a safe social network of support. Young people are able to spend time in the independence flat where they learn how to look after themselves and experience living alone and the potential isolation this can bring. Young people who leave the home to live independently are supported by staff for a further period of time to ensure transition to independent living is as smooth as possible. This means young people acquire skills and receive care to help them prepare for adulthood.

Quality of care

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

Young people are involved in all aspects of their care and in the running of the home. Young people benefit from good care management procedures. Placement

plans identify the individual needs of young people and how these can best be met. Young people and their key worker then develop a placement plan action record which details how they will be cared for on a daily basis and sets objectives to improve the young person's life. These are monitored regularly and young people identify the progress they have made and set new objectives. Young people who have English as a second language are supported to contribute to their plans through an interpreter. Cultural needs are reflected in the day-to-day care of young people, for example, adapting routines to meet the requirements of Ramadan. As a result the day-to-day care of the young people reflects the individual requirements of their placement plan. Young people are aware of how to complain and feel supported to do so. There have been no complaints since the last inspection.

Young people benefit from a creative approach to consultation. Staff utilise activities to discuss issues and plans with young people. There are also regular opportunities at mealtimes to share their views at informal 'tea-meetings'. Young people use these to give their opinions, share any concerns, suggest activities and plan the menu. As a result young people are actively engaged in how the home operates and in their care.

Young people benefit from strong relationships with staff and interact well with each other. A social worker said a young person has 'good, honest relationships with staff and has made good attachments with other young people'. Young people say they feel very well cared for and looked after; 'they do their best for me, they care and I like it here'. Staff work closely with young people to understand triggers to their behaviour. Where there has been incidents of poor behaviour staff have been creative and flexible to develop positive behaviour management strategies to support young people and improve their behaviour. Young people are involved in developing skills to manage their emotions and deal with conflict. A young person, reviewing their care objectives, said 'I want to make the effort to talk to staff to help me calm down'. As a result young people enjoy positive relationships and improve their behaviour.

Young people's health needs and medical history are clearly detailed and action plans identify how best to meet these needs. Young people benefit from support from a range of health professionals including mental health nurses and staff support them to attend appointments. Staff work in partnership with other agencies and organisations to develop strategies to address issues of substance and solvent abuse. Good links are made with local shop keepers to prevent young people from obtaining solvents illegally. This means young people understand key health risks and as a result drug and solvent abuse has substantially decreased. Staff are trained in first aid and the safe administration of medication. Written records of medication are clear and accurate. This means the arrangements for dealing with medication are safe and effective. Healthy living, diet and exercise are encouraged. As a result the physical, emotional and psychological health of young people are promoted.

Young people live in a family home environment with access to a variety of rooms for socialising and space to be on their own. The home has its own independence training flat to support the young people in transition to adulthood. The home is

located close to local amenities providing access to a variety of activities to promote young people's development.

Staff encourage young people to take part in a wide range of leisure pursuits and activities which include football, golf, cinema, trips out to theme parks and fishing. Young people are encouraged to access facilities in the community such as the swimming pool. This means young people are engaged in a range of enjoyable activities.

Young people benefit from a range of educational opportunities and programmes to support their individual learning needs. Staff and education providers maintain excellent communication to ensure young people maintain their attendance and staff are able to support their learning. Young people have access to computers and a quiet space in the home to learn. As a result, young people are supported to achieve their educational potential.

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 in the home and the community and that bullying is no longer an issue. They are able to identify an adult to talk to if they are concerned. The home has very good anti-bullying procedures to follow if there are any incidents and as a result previous incidents of bullying have been dealt with promptly and effectively. This means young people are protected from bullying.

Young people have individual behaviour management plans that identify triggers to behaviour and how best to manage them, these are constantly reviewed with young people to ensure appropriate strategies are in place. Staff use various techniques to de-escalate any incidents and the use of restraint is as a last resort. There has been minimal use of restraint and any incidents are well recorded and include a debrief for staff and young people. Young people develop their incentive systems with staff which recognise good behaviour and achievements. Sanctions for poor behaviour are recorded well and include young people's comments. The manager monitors the effectiveness of sanctions and where appropriate they have been changed to be more beneficial and effective for the individual young person. As a result young people learn the consequences of their actions, develop self-control and manage their own behaviour.

The home has good policies and procedures for safeguarding practices. Staff are trained in safeguarding including training with other agencies to support young people at risk of sexual exploitation. Staff are clear on their role in the safeguarding process. Staff have developed a proactive risk assessment tool to support their work with young people. This tool includes information on all aspects of keeping young people safe and resources for working with young people to help them identify and manage their own risks.

Young people are protected from unsuitable people gaining employment by a good

recruitment process. Visitors to the home are asked to sign in and identification is checked. This further ensures young people are protected from significant harm. A range of proportionate risk assessments enable young people to experience new challenges and develop new skills whilst remaining safe.

Young people are protected if they are absent from the home. The home has a good missing from care procedure and protocol developed with the police, local authority and local safeguarding board. Each young person has a missing from home individual risk management analysis that details specific risks and how to manage any absence. The number of incidents of young people missing has reduced. Young people who have been absent or missing are responded to positively on their return. Staff ensure they are well and remain safe and later discuss triggers for their absence and explain the risks associated with going missing in key work sessions. Other agencies carry out return interviews and safe and well checks as part of the joint protocol. This ensures young people are protected as far as possible.

Regular fire drills are held and fire alarm systems are checked as required. There is a comprehensive fire risk assessment and health and safety assessment for the building and equipment. As a result the building is safe and appropriately secure.

Leadership and management

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

Young people benefit from a home that continues to improve. The home has met the requirement made at the last inspection and this means significant events are notified to the appropriate agencies as required. No requirements or recommendations are made as a result of this inspection. The manager has a clear development plan in place with challenging objectives to improve the quality of care and outcomes for young people. Staff are supported to develop new resources for work with young people to improve their safety. The home has developed strong partnership working with various agencies and organisations which supports the improving care for young people.

Staff and young people are clear about the objectives and ethos of the home. Staff provide a very good quality of service for young people in line with the home's Statement of Purpose. The home provides each new young person with a guide which details the service offered. In addition they are given a welcome box of items such as a notebook, toiletries, soft toy, calculator and pens.

The service is managed and staffed by suitable personnel who are well qualified and have a range of skills and experiences. The staff rota ensures young people's needs are met through the provision of sufficient staffing. Staffing is increased where required to meet additional needs. Staff receive a good induction into the home and continue to develop their skills and knowledge through the provision of a range of training opportunities. Staff say they receive good quality support from each other and from a strong management team. Supervision is effective and held regularly. This ensures the service provided to young people remains of a high quality.

Rigorous monitoring procedures examine the quality of the service provided, the progress of young people and ensure young people are kept safe. The registered provider undertakes visits to the home in accordance with regulations and carries out checks to ensure the welfare of young people is monitored. The registered provider consults with young people to identify any areas for development to improve the quality of care provided. The manager monitors records kept by the home to identify any concerns, patterns or trends. Reviews of the quality of care and progress made are sent to Ofsted as required. Records are clear and kept securely and contribute to an understanding of the young person's life. As a result young people are consulted about the quality of care they receive and how effectively their needs are met and their welfare and protection is monitored.

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.