

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Rosemary Chapman
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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**.

This home provides a good quality of care and staff support which results in young people making good progress and having good outcomes. Of particular note is the progress young people have made in education, reducing their risk-taking behaviour and developing good independent living skills. Staff work well with other agencies, including the police, health and placing social workers, so that the support is consistent and targeted appropriately. Child-focused action plans are used to identify young people's individual and specific needs and how these are going to be met so that young people make progress in the areas identified. Social workers and parents are very satisfied with the input the staff have in working towards achieving young people's targets.

Young people are actively involved in their care planning and their views are valued in developing the home. Young people are positive about the support they get from staff and there are positive relationships between staff and young people which are instrumental in improving behaviour and keeping young people safe. Safety is well promoted; young people feel safe and they are safe as they are protected by robust safeguarding practices implemented by knowledgeable staff.

Leaders and managers are committed to improving the quality of care, and do this through robust monitoring, listening to young people and utilising the views of staff. Staff are committed to the young people, know them well and want the very best for them. They are enabled to provide a good service because they are well trained, well supervised and have good managerial and peer support. Two areas for improvement, in relation to documentation, have been identified as a result of this inspection,

which although are regulatory shortfalls, do not have an impact on the safety and well-being of young people.

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 where a measure of restraint is used on a child, the record under paragraph (3) must include details of any methods used to avoid the need to use that measure (Regulation 17B (4)(b))	28/02/2014
4 (2001)	ensure the statement of purpose and children's guide are provided to Ofsted. (Regulation 4(2) and (5))	28/02/2014

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people make good progress and have good outcomes in all aspects of their lives. A social worker commented that her young person had made 'massive progress' since coming to live at this home, and another commented that her young person had 'moved on considerably, emotionally and practically'. A young person said: 'I have made extremely good progress and I am loads happier.'

All the young people are either at school, college or in work, and for some this is a significant improvement on their situation prior to admission to this home. The four young people who attend school and college have excellent attendance and their attainment and projected grades are very good. The likelihood of them having better prospects in adulthood is significantly enhanced by their success in education.

Young people have significantly reduced their risk-taking behaviour since coming to live at this home. Young people do not engage in drug or alcohol misuse or offending. They all have a really good understanding of healthy living, but some continue to engage in activities such as smoking, albeit to a reduced level, which has an impact on their health outcomes.

Young people are confident, self-assured and proud of their achievements. Their progress in areas such as behaviour and education has had a positive impact on their relationships with their families. This has not only resulted in them having a better understanding of their past and their identity, but also provided the opportunity for

additional support through improved and more frequent contact arrangements.

Young people are active participants in the home and the community. They engage in a wide range of activities, such as wall climbing, Guides, the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme, music and sports. They have friends from school, work and college who they visit, and who can visit them. This helps build their confidence, their self-esteem as well as contributing to their physical and emotional health and well-being. Young people also contribute their views and opinions in various aspects of the support provided to them and the running of the home, which encourages them to feel valued. For example, they chose the colour scheme when the lounge was redecorated, and choose the menu each week.

Young people develop very good independence skills so that they leave the home able to care for themselves successfully, both practically and emotionally.

Quality of care

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

Young people have good relationships with the staff and with each other. Young people's comments include, 'staff are brilliant', 'the cook is fantastic', and 'coming to this children's home is the best thing I have done'. They all get on well with their key workers but can talk to other staff as well. Although not all young people get on as well with everyone, this does not detract from the warm and positive atmosphere in the home. Young people are encouraged to express their opinions through the informal meetings they have at tea time, through the 'wish tree' and through key worker sessions. They also contribute fully to their action plan and reviews. This results in young people who feel valued and understand how to sustain positive relationships and attachments with other people.

Young people say they can talk to staff if they have any worries or concerns, and are aware of how to complain. Three complaints have been made since the last inspection and all have been dealt with appropriately and to the satisfaction of the young people concerned. There are leaflets and posters about other independent forms of support, such as advocacy, and Ofsted's details are available in the young people's guide. This enables young people to access other avenues of support if they do not wish to talk to staff in the home, and further promotes their safety.

Staff respect young people and value them for who they are. This enables young people to have a positive self-view and blossom as individuals. Their needs as individuals are clearly identified, including those relating to culture, race and religion, but also their interests and personalities. Placement and action plans clearly identify how these needs are going to be met and are regularly evaluated for their success.

Young people receive appropriate support to keep them healthy. Staff provide good advice, but they also have access to other agencies and the looked after children nurse. The latter is a regular visitor to the home and is available for advice and support about any health-related issue. Likewise drug and alcohol agencies visit to

provide information, advice and support in a proactive way to prevent issues escalating. Young people have generally engaged with this support to have healthier lifestyles.

The ethos of the home, underpinned by the actions of staff, promotes school attendance successfully. The home has good facilities which support young people to do homework in an environment with computers and resources. Staff assist where necessary. Staff also attend parents' evenings and liaise with schools if there are difficulties. This has resulted in young people's good attendance, progress and achievement.

Staff view parents as important to young people's lives and have a lot of contact with them, so that young people benefit from improved relationships. Parents commented that they were 'chuffed to bits' and 'over the moon' with the home and could see the progress their children had made while living there. One said the staff 'had brought the goodness out of my child', and another commented their child 'had come a long way'. They feel they are treated with respect, supported and valued for the role they play in the young people's lives. This has been very effective in improving relationships and working consistently together for the benefit of the young people.

Young people engage in a wide variety of activities and their interests are promoted. If young people are not keen to engage in activities, staff try hard to find something they are interested in. Staff support young people to pursue and continue with their activities, for example, by attending a 'gig' where a young person was performing. They take them to local football matches and do other activities, such as bowling, as a means to sustain the key-working relationships. All young people have an annual holiday, and the photos displayed demonstrate young people having a lot of enjoyment from this.

The home has a very effective life development skills package which young people work through prior to leaving the home to ensure they have the necessary skills to live independently. It covers all the relevant areas such as money management, relationships, shopping, cooking and household tasks. Young people, have the opportunity to practice these skills independently as the home has a small flat attached to it where young people go to for a few days at a time so they have the experience of living alone.

The home is well located, close to public transport and community facilities. Although it was built as a children's home some years ago, and externally has a rather institutional appearance, it provides homely accommodation which is well decorated, well furnished and clean.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

All the young people say that they feel safe in the home and that there is no bullying. Young people's safety is promoted well because staff access regular training

in safeguarding and written guidance, including safeguarding and missing from care procedures, is readily available, and they implement this in practice. Staff have had additional guidance in recognising and understanding child sexual exploitation, and one member of staff has undertaken a developmental piece of work in this area to further her knowledge and skills for the benefit of other staff and young people. Additionally, there are city-wide meetings to share information and good practice. Good multi-agency working, including with the police, has ensured that appropriate action is taken by all agencies, and that young people experience a consistent approach. These factors have had an impact on young people's safety in this home, with risk being reduced from high to low. Young people now rarely go missing, and if they do, they return swiftly and are not going to high-risk areas. This is a significant improvement and has had a positive impact on their safety and well-being.

Young people behave well, as demonstrated by the very low number of sanctions and physical interventions since the last inspection, there being one of each. If young people behave in a way that is unacceptable, the approach of staff is to talk things through and explain why the behaviour is wrong, and the impact this has on other people. This helps young people develop understanding and empathy, and accept responsibility for the way they behave. Staff also use an incentive and reward scheme which is proving effective and popular with the young people. This promotes young people's positive behaviour and results in improved self-esteem as they can see tangible results of their progress. Although sanctions and restraints are recorded thoroughly, one aspect in the restraints book is not recorded. This relates to the methods used to prevent the need for restraint. As the level of physical intervention is very low, this has not had an impact on young people's well-being or safety, but this shortfall prevents the manager from having full oversight of the incident and any lessons which may have to be learned to prevent a reoccurrence.

Risk is well assessed and regularly reviewed to ensure the approach to risk management is up to date. Young people are enabled to take appropriate risks, commensurate with their age, so they are not disadvantaged by being in care. Staff advocate strongly for young people to ensure they can take part in activities which their peers may access. For example, one young person was able to go to a music festival, which included overnight camping, because staff ensured the young person was well prepared to deal with any difficult situations through a robust risk management plan.

Young people's safety is also ensured by living in a safe and secure environment. All health and safety matters are addressed through risk assessment, regular servicing of equipment and utilities, regular checks of the building and good maintenance. Fire safety is addressed through regular drills, including when a young person is admitted, appropriate checks and regular servicing of the alarms and fire-fighting equipment. As a result, all young people are very clear about what to do in the event of a fire.

Young people are prevented from unsuitable people having access to them through robust recruitment checks of staff and monitoring of visitors who are on the premises.

Leadership and management

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

The home is effectively managed so that it provides good outcomes for young people. There are appropriate managerial arrangements to support the home, including an experienced Registered Manager and deputy manager. The Statement of Purpose and young people's guide provide clear information about how the home operates and the services it provides. However, these documents have not been provided to Ofsted, which means the regulator does not have the opportunity to assess the aims and objectives and any changes in provision.

The home continues to build on its previous good practice and develop further, despite there being no requirements or recommendations from the previous inspection. Improvements include the placement planning, redecoration, and effective partnership working with health and education which have resulted in improved outcomes. The development plan is focused on young people's outcomes and how these can be improved further. Internal and external monitoring further supports improvement. This occurs at regular intervals and is rigorous. Other systems for monitoring young people's progress include the incentive and reward scheme, reviews and action plans.

Good partnership working supports the provision of consistent, high quality care. Social workers and independent reviewing officers are positive about the home and comment on the good communication and effective support.

Staff are committed to providing good quality care and support so that young people achieve their potential. They are supported in this by regular supervision and access to good quality training so that they retain their competence and up-to-date knowledge. Staff comment that they get good managerial support, one saying, 'I couldn't ask for better managers.' Staff work together well as a team, sharing their knowledge, skills and experience. There is good communication through handovers and team meetings, so that all staff are aware of any changes to young people's plans and continue to provide consistent support.

Young people's records are well organised, up to date, stored securely and give a good picture of the young person's time in the home, should they choose to access them now or in the future.

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.