

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Catherine Ross
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This children's home is owned and managed by the local authority. It can accommodate up to four young people aged between 11 to 17 years. The home provides care for young people with emotional or 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 make good progress in relation to their starting points while living at this home. Young people are supported to access education and make good progress in relation to their health. Staff receive good training and support which equips them with skills to support young people in their care. Young people are kept safe by robust safeguarding procedures. Individual care plans underpin the good quality and effective support young people receive. Young people feel listened to and are enabled to be part of their care planning and participate fully in the running of the home. A strength of the home is staff's commitment to supporting young people to have their voices heard.

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people say they have improved their behaviour since living in the home. There has been a decrease in incidents of going missing and also behaviours which may need physical intervention to keep young people safe.

Young people enjoy good health. There is a focus on living a healthy lifestyle. Both young people and staff are encouraged and supported to make healthy options with food, exercise and personal care. Young people say that since coming to the home they are making more sensible choices at mealtimes. Young people demonstrate a good understanding of their individual health needs and take responsibility for their own health; for example, by accessing the onsite gym facilities in their spare time.

Where appropriate, young people self-administer medication and have identified their own health needs and taken action to become healthier; for example, by giving up smoking.

Young people are able to understand complex decisions that are made about their lives and are supported very well by staff to access other avenues of support, such as advocacy should they wish to use this. Young people understand their rights and are supported to have their voices heard when decisions are made that they do not agree with or do not understand. Most young people are involved in education or are making positive steps towards securing apprenticeships or further education. Young people make good progress with their education. Some have taken GCSEs and others have signed up for another year of further education. Young people who struggle to remain engaged in education are supported by staff who have good relationships with education providers.

Young people are developing good social and communication skills. Young people say they have developed skills of discussion and negotiation because they are listened to by staff. Young people develop skills of independence, such as cooking for others, learning how to use a bus and how to keep in contact with staff when out in the community. Risk assessments are carefully balanced, allowing vulnerable young people to make substantial progress in their independence skills in a safe way.

Contact with people significant to young people's lives is encouraged. As a result of a meeting with the children's rights officer, overnight stays for young people's friends have been increased. This helps young people develop and sustain relationships with people important to them. Young people are supported to increase the time they spend with loved ones and staff work hard to develop effective relationships with people significant to the lives of young people.

Quality of care

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

A young person commented that staff were 'spot on' with the support they have given during the young person's time at the home. The quality of relationships between carers and young people is good. Young people can identify key adults who they could talk to if they were worried or unhappy in the home. Staff work hard to build relationships with young people, using key worker sessions as an aid to this. Key worker sessions cover a range of subjects, such as understanding sexual exploitation, healthy eating, budgeting, health and exercise. Young people are also encouraged to write their own record of their key working session which is added to their file, helping young people feel that they are involved in their own care.

The quality of care provided is having a positive impact on young people's development and progress. Placing social workers, independent reviewing officers and external professionals confirm this. Each young person is cared for in line with an individual plan and safe care plan. These documents are of good quality and demonstrate a strong understanding of young people's individual preferences and

needs. Young people are aware of what information is kept about them and are encouraged to read, sign and comment on plans and review documentation.

There is effective partnership working with other agencies, including social workers, health and education services and those with safeguarding responsibilities. Staff are strong advocates for young people. They effectively and professionally challenge any barriers to young people's development. This includes ensuring young people's family contact is positive and that young people are provided with effective support from placing authorities. This is a strength of the service. It ensures young people are not disadvantaged by being a looked after child and are supported to have their voices heard.

Young people are supported to develop their self-identity by choosing their own clothing, activities and personalising their bedrooms. Staff guide and advise sensible options; however, young people are able to reflect their culture, preferences, and individual tastes. Mealtimes are an enjoyable experience in the home where carers and young people eat communally. Young people are respectful of each other's differences and consequently enjoy good relationships together. The house is well maintained and decorated.

Young people are able to negotiate about life in the home through regular young people's meetings. Young people are developing team building and negotiation skills. Young people know how to make complaints. When complaints are made these are managed and resolved appropriately often by use of a resolution meeting. Most young people say they are happy with this approach and have no concern with the way in which complaints are handled. The Registered Manager and staff team learn from complaints and have been able to change their practice to help improve outcomes for young people.

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 living at the home. Young people have decreased risk-taking behaviours, such as smoking or going missing. Parents and placing social workers confirm this and are pleased with the progress young people are making. All staff take responsibility for guiding young people to make safe choices and manage risk effectively. Good quality handover between staff aids information sharing. A young person commented, 'there has never been a time when I haven't felt safe here.'

Safeguarding continues to have a high priority within the home. Staff are aware of their responsibilities and effectively implement policies, procedures and risk assessments in practice. Staff are alert to young people's vulnerabilities and closely monitor their welfare. They appropriately share any concerns with one of the experienced and suitably-trained senior managers. There have been few instances of young people going missing since the last inspection. Staff are aware of factors that may trigger young people to go missing and take action to reduce this risk. For

example, this includes by engaging young people in conversation or in activities they enjoy. If young people do go missing, staff promptly follow agreed procedures and are proactive in searching for young people and encouraging them to return to the home.

The home successfully implements a positive behaviour management policy. There is effective use of de-escalation, boundaries and expectations. Individual behaviour support strategies are fully understood by everyone. Staff are well-trained in an approved behaviour intervention method. Physical interventions are used only when absolutely necessary to ensure safety. Young people's behaviour is managed by building good relationships, listening to young people and understanding young people's triggers. As a result, use of physical restraint is very low with no use of physical restraint since the last inspection.

Recruitment information was not looked at during this inspection as there have been no new appointments. Risk assessments, policies and procedures are in place to support the maintenance of a safe environment. Where issues are identified, these are attended to promptly. Young people confirm their privacy and dignity is respected. Young people are taught the importance of keeping important, confidential documents safe. The home and grounds are physically safe and appropriately secure. Robust safety and servicing checks are undertaken. Regular fire drills take place to ensure staff and young people can practise the evacuation drills both during the day time and night time.

Leadership and management

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

The home is managed by a Registered Manager who supports a committed staff team. There have been some changes in patterns of staffing due to some absences. The home has tried hard to limit the impact on young people of these changes in staffing. Staff have taken on extra shifts and reserve workers, who are known to the young people, have been used to aid consistency. Young people say they have not felt any negative impact from these changes. Staff who have returned from absence feel well supported by the management team. Young people speak positively of the staff team.

The Registered Manager and his team use self-evaluation forms, service plans and development plans to track and monitor progress made. The Registered Manager identifies areas for development and managers demonstrate a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the service. This is also aided by monthly visits under Regulation 33 of the Children's Homes Regulations. These reports appropriately challenge the management team and staff to improve. There has been a focus at the home since the last inspection on listening to young people, improving staff practice and strengthening working relationships in the staff team. These changes have had a positive impact on the care young people receive.

At the last inspection, two requirements and one recommendation were made.

Security of the home has been improved with improved practice in relation to locking the front door. This means that the home is secure from unauthorised access. Rearrangement of office furniture means confidential information relating to young people and staff is now away from windows, helping to maintain confidentiality. The recording of medication has improved, with amendments being made to the recording system. This means staff are now recording in one place as opposed to two, meaning there is less room for error. These changes have improved the quality of care and safety of young people.

Young people's files are stored securely both within physical files, and electronically. Records are up to date and provide an understanding of the young person's journey through the home. Young people's files contain all information and documents needed. The files are regularly audited by the Registered Manager to ensure information is current and up to date. The home records all significant events, both positive and negative, which involve young people. This practice ensures records contribute to an understanding of the child's life.

The Statement of Purpose provides clear aims and objectives for the service and how these are met. The children's guide is accessible and uses simple language to explain the purpose of the home. It contains all relevant information, including information about independent advocates, appropriate help lines and Ofsted's contact details.

There is a commitment to a wide range of staff training. Staff feel their training needs are met and they positively engage in the training on offer. Staff receive relevant ongoing training in topics, such as safeguarding, behaviour management and first aid. Staff receive regular supervision and support through formal individual supervision and team meetings. Staff say they are well supported through the structures in place, enabling staff to offer young people good quality care.

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.