

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Philip Cass
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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 with emotional and/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**.

Most residents make good progress in the home. They grow in self-esteem and develop improved self-confidence. Consequently, they enjoy smooth transitions to independent living arrangements. However, despite the robust efforts of staff, some young people do not currently have good outcomes. This is because their risk-taking behaviours, such as drug and alcohol use and sexual health risks, are not decreasing following placement at the home.

Staff demonstrate great resilience in their efforts to minimise the impact of risk-taking behaviours on young people. A key strength of the service is the way that it responds to young people who place themselves at risk of exploitation. Managers and staff fully understand how to recognise and respond to concerns over the safety of young people. The determined actions of staff have significantly improved the safety of young people.

Another strength of the home is the way that it supports young people to do well at school. Because staff help young people to understand the importance of education, attendance levels increase following admission to the home. Young people are provided with personalised support packages that help them to do well at school.

The leadership and management of the home is strong. Experienced managers take prompt action to tackle any weaknesses identified through quality assurance processes. Staff feel well supported because managers are approachable and knowledgeable. Good quality care planning systems ensure that all staff have a good understanding of how to meet the needs of young people.

Following this inspection, the home is required to correct an administrative error that has resulted in some staff not being able to update their first aid qualifications promptly.

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
20 (2001)	ensure that at all times, at least one person on duty at the children's home has a suitable first aid qualification. (Regulation 20 (2) (e))	25/11/2013

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **adequate**.

Established residents become more emotionally resilient. They overcome patterns of challenging and violent behaviours. When they move on from the home, they have significantly improved social skills and self-confidence. This means that they are able to look forward to successful futures. The home has a good track record in supporting young people, over time, to reduce damaging and risk-taking behaviours. However, some current residents have been admitted to the home with a significant history of running away and substance misuse. These behaviours are not presently reducing. Consequently, their outcomes are not good.

Young people make good progress in overcoming negative attitudes to school. Because they begin to view education more positively, they have significantly improved attendance. Young people make good progress towards re-integration into mainstream education. As young people experience success at school, they grow in confidence and develop improved self-esteem. Young people have gained qualifications that lead directly to employment in the construction industry. Success at school significantly improves the life chances of young people placed at the home.

Access to a range of health services including specialist drug workers, mental health professionals and counsellors improves health outcomes for young people. The provision of specialist services to address issues of identity helps young people develop a better understanding of their background and history. Because the home provides good support and encouragement to young people who are reluctant to engage with health professionals; health conditions are effectively identified and treated.

Contact arrangements are well organised and ensure that young people can benefit from time spent with their families and social networks in the community.

The home makes good use of training packs, tailored to the individual needs of young people, to support the preparation for independence. The home has a sensitive approach to preparation for independence. This ensures that young people do not experience unnecessary anxiety as they prepare to move on from the home. A successful transition to adult life is supported because the home is good at maintaining contact with young people who move into independent living arrangements. This reduces the anxiety of young people leaving the home. It also ensures that young people do not experience feelings of rejection.

Young people are actively involved in the decision making processes in the home. All young people take part in weekly meetings where they are consulted on developments in the home. Because young people are centrally involved in recruitment decisions, they are able to impact on choices about who looks after them. This means that young people make a positive contribution to their home.

Quality of care

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

Staff are experienced and highly skilled at building trusting relationships with young people. They demonstrate great empathy and understanding of the background and history of young people. Young people say that they enjoy the company of staff. They feel that staff do all that they can to care for them. Because the staff are consistently respectful and encouraging towards young people, they are good role models. Where young people are tactile, staff respond appropriately ensuring that they can experience warmth and affection.

The home is well decorated and homely. Maintenance systems are effective in ensuring that any damage is repaired promptly. This ensures that the home provides a nurturing and pleasant environment for young people.

The home supports young people well to make progress at school. Effective morning routines help young people to attend school in a positive frame of mind. Bespoke packages of individual support enable young people to overcome anxieties and experience success. The home advocates very well for young people to ensure that they access full time education. This enables all young people to overcome barriers to education that result from emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Care plans are detailed and provide clear guidance to staff. This means that staff have a good understanding of the needs of young people. Effective strategies are in place to ensure that care plan objectives are met. The role of the key worker is well defined. This means that key workers clearly understand their role in overseeing the implementation of care plans, liaising with families and external agencies, and providing individual support for the young person. Keyworkers are highly skilled at

building strong trusting relationships with their key child. As a result, sensitive issues can be addressed well. Care plans provide staff with detailed information about how to address cultural, religious and other individual needs. This means that the home is good at promoting and celebrating diversity.

The home ensures that young people regularly participate in a range of enriching and stimulating activities, both in the community and in the home. In recent weeks young people have watched local football teams, been horse-riding, and enjoyed trips to the cinema. Young people are members of local sports clubs and enjoy a range of craft activities in the home. Because young people take part in such a wide range of activity, they are able to develop interests, and learn new skills. Young people grow in self-esteem as a result of their activity programme.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Staff have a very strong understanding of how to reduce the risk of abuse and exploitation. They have experience of supporting young people to reduce risk-taking behaviours. This gives them confidence that they can minimise the impact of the damaging behaviours displayed by current residents. When young people place themselves at risk by running away from the home staff display great determination and resilience in ensuring that they are protected. Staff actively follow young people, and are robust in challenging members of the community who may harbour young people. Current residents do not all value the efforts of staff to keep them safe. However, staff fully understand their responsibility to protect young people in their care.

Each young person has a comprehensive individual risk assessment. The risk assessment process is particularly strong in relation to young people who are vulnerable to exploitation. Where appropriate, the manager facilitates a multi-agency review of risk to ensure that all agencies, including police and social care, understand and contribute to risk management strategies. As well as core training in safeguarding, all staff have undertaken additional training that enables them to recognise and respond to the warning signs of child sexual exploitation. This further reduces the vulnerability of young people to abuse and exploitation.

Young people know how to raise a concern or make a complaint in the home. They are comfortable in challenging decisions that they do not agree with. Young people feel that their views are listened to and respected, even if staff do not always agree. Young people also know how to make a complaint to external agencies. The home has effective systems in place to ensure that young people are able to speak privately to independent advocates. This reduces the risk of abuse in the home.

Challenging behaviour is managed very well in the home. Staff communicate well with young people so that boundaries are clearly explained and understood. Staff make every effort to empathise with young people who are in crisis. They seek to address the underlying causes of challenging behaviour rather than respond in a

punitive manner. In general, young people respond positively to this approach. Challenging behaviour is reduced as young people build trusting relationships with staff. Effective behaviour management strategies mean that restraint has not been required in the home for more than two years.

Young people's meetings are used well to address challenging behaviour and seek the involvement of young people in the formulation of routines and boundaries in the home. Bullying is managed well through group discussion. Following incidents of bullying staff work effectively with the perpetrators to help them to understand the impact of bullying and ensure that no further incidents of bullying take place. Young people report that they value the way that staff address bullying through resolution meetings.

Leadership and management

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

The manager and deputy manager support their team very well. Regular staff meetings provide a forum for staff to share best practice and develop strategies to meet the needs of the young people. Staff also appreciate the informal guidance offered by the manager through his 'hands on' approach to the delivery of care in the home.

Staff receive regular supervision that they find helpful and supportive. Supervision is used effectively, alongside performance management processes, to improve work practice and set high expectations of staff. On-call arrangements are effective and mean that an experienced manager is available to support inexperienced staff at all times.

All staff benefit from a comprehensive range of training that is tailored to the needs of the young people. All staff undertake a rigorous induction and go on to gain a qualification appropriate to their role. Experienced staff are given opportunities to undertake additional qualifications relevant to their role. For example, a staff member is undertaking a qualification that provides specialist knowledge in drugs and substance misuse.

Although all staff are trained in first aid, an administrative error has meant that a minority of staff have not refreshed their training promptly. This has resulted in isolated instances of young people being cared for by staff who do not have up to date first aid qualifications. This shortfall has not impacted on the welfare of young people because staff are still able to carry out emergency first aid if necessary. Managers have ensured that the administrative shortfalls are now corrected.

The home responds to complaints quickly and, where appropriate, refers them to senior managers for investigation. This promotes independence and transparency in the complaints process. Investigations into complaints are carried out thoroughly, with detailed feedback given to the complainant. A strong complaints system enables complainants to take their issues further if they are not satisfied with the way the

complaint has been investigated. The home views complaints positively as an opportunity to improve the service. This means that lessons are learned effectively from any shortfalls identified.

The home has good quality assurance processes. These ensure that the quality of care is monitored carefully, and that shortfalls are identified and addressed promptly. Quality assurance undertaken by the manager is detailed and evaluative. This supports the continual improvement of the home. Continual improvement is further promoted through the home's development plan. Since the last inspection, the development plan has driven improvement in recording, risk assessment and activity planning.

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.