

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Susan Mullin
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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 home provides care and accommodation for up to four young people with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. The home is operated by Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council.

Overall effectiveness

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

The effectiveness with which the home provides personalised care is outstanding and takes full account of the individual needs of each young person, while consistently promoting positive outcomes. Young people's holistic needs are professionally documented and records which are of a high standard, are frequently reviewed and updated regularly. This ensures young people are receiving very high levels of care and full support based on their current identified needs. Overall, most records relating to young people's care are maintained.

Safeguarding young people is at the forefront of practice and there are robust and well-known systems and practices in place, to protect young people from the risk of harm or abuse. Young people themselves say that they are safe and feel that they are well looked after.

Staff are highly trained and well qualified and possess the skills necessary to meet the needs of the young people in their care. Staff communicate very effectively within the team to ensure that there is consistency in the way young people are cared for. Staff morale is high and staff spoken to confirm that they feel they are fully supported by the Registered Manager and the operations manager.

Relationships between young people and staff are very genuine and meaningful and young people confirm that they feel able to talk to staff about anything. They say that staff listen to their views and help them to resolve problems. Staff help young people to develop confidence and self-esteem through challenge and ongoing support.

Areas for improvementStatutory 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
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21 (2001)	ensure a written record is kept of the administration of any medicine to any child. (Regulation 21 (2)(c))	07/09/2011
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Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people are given excellent individualised support from staff and they make rapid progress in the home. Young people feel safe, valued and achieve positive outcomes in a caring, nurturing environment. For example, young people are in full-time education and there is a raft of evidence that they achieve very well in school. For example, one young person has recently been awarded a catering certificate and is the youngest person in the school to attain this much coveted award. Staff are very keen to determine any homework for each young person and ensure that they spend appropriate time and one-to-one assistance in completing this in a timely fashion. The young people also benefit from the home's own study/homework room, with access to two computers. When homework has been completed the young people may enjoy protected use of the internet or have fun with the many games and art and craft materials that are available in the home.

Staff help young people to learn about their immediate community and the wider world and encourage them to take an interest in the cultures of other people they come into contact with. For example, staff are happy to talk about their own religion and culture in response to young people's requests for information. Young people are also supported to respect the rights of others both inside and out of the home. Staff are also proactive in encouraging young people to make friendships with other young people in the community, which supports their emotional development and helps to promote their self esteem. Additionally, staff help young people to deal with any problems they have with friends in the local area so that these friendships remain positive.

Staff really enjoy helping young people to develop practical skills that will help them in adult life; this is at a pace that is appropriate to their age and individual needs. Young people are encouraged to keep their own rooms clean and tidy and to learn how to manage their money. They are supported to choose their meals, which helps them to understand about healthy eating. They are also encouraged to help staff to prepare meals, so that they can learn how to cook and further develop their social skills. Young people are expected to help staff periodically, with the household chores and ensure that their laundry is washed regularly. Young people are encouraged to develop self awareness about the benefits of good personal hygiene. This helps to increase young people's self-esteem and self-image.

Young people benefit from appropriate contact with family, friends and other people who are important to them. Young people are able to meet with their family at the home and other visits are arranged at convenient locations so that contact is actively supported. Staff are very effective with working in partnership with friends and family to maintain contact where appropriate. Contact by phone is also encouraged

and supported. Young people have access to a payphone that is convenient and private.

Quality of care

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

Young people enjoy positive and warm relationships with staff and, in general, they get along well with each other. There is a lot of friendly banter in the home and a genuine affection for each other. Staff are excellent at helping young people improve their socially unacceptable behaviours. Young people are treated very much as individuals with fair, but firm, consistent boundaries.

Young people feel that their views, wishes and feelings are actively sought and that they influence the running of the home. Young people are encouraged to participate in regular house meetings where issues can be discussed with staff. Young people clearly understand how to make a complaint and feel confident to do so. One young person stated, 'I have never needed to make a complaint. If I am unhappy about something, I talk to the staff and they put it right'. The home received three written compliments. One was from a member of staff who works on a sessional basis: 'Thank you for making my time at Hilton Road an enjoyable one, I really have enjoyed the experience'. The second was from a practice assessor from family placement unit: 'Many thanks to you and your staff for supporting the student social worker, he had a very positive experience and it was great for me to work with you.' The third was from a student social worker: 'Thanks for the support during my placement and the high quality of the practice experience I received'.

Young people are encouraged to work towards incentives and save money towards a larger item or a special day out. Young people are informed regularly of what budget they have for specific organised activities and are taught to realise that they have to work hard and behave acceptably to enjoy 'extras'. One young person stated, 'I want to have my own rabbit and the staff have explained to me that if I behave well and am not rude, they will think about it.' Staff help young people to understand why it may not be possible to act upon their wishes in all cases.

Young people are cared for in line with their individual placement plan, which centres on the involvement of young people and people who are important to them. Young people are guided to understand what steps they need to take to make positive changes in their lives. One young person stated, 'The staff have helped me so much since my father died and they are helping me deal with it. When I get upset or sad they come and talk to me and make me feel better'.

The home provides a healthy environment where young people are able to access the services and support they need to meet their physical, emotional and psychological health needs. Young people have access to professional help which includes counselling, where required, which is undertaken in the home. Young people are encouraged to keep fit and healthy by participating in regular exercise activities which helps to maintain their physical fitness. Staff actively encourage young people

to participate in a range of activities as part of building their social skills. The home is excellent at providing opportunities for young people to explore leisure activities of their choice and also offers them an annual holiday. As a result, this helps improve young people's self-confidence and, in turn, feel better about themselves. Medication is stored appropriately. However, there were two occasions when medication had not been recorded as administered on the medication administration record, although this had been recorded as given on the daily log sheet.

A social worker stated that staff make a very good contribution to young people's reviews. Staff provide detailed reports of their progress, help young people to complete consultation documents, and support young people at the meetings. The work that care staff do ensures that placing authorities have up-to-date information about the care and welfare of young people and that young people themselves are fully involved in the decisions that are made about their lives.

Staff are dynamic in helping young people to achieve their individual potential. They work closely with schools to support young people. Staff make sure that young people go to school regularly and help them with their work. They attend meetings and contribute to young people's education reviews. This means that they have a thorough understanding of young people's levels of attainment and of the support they need to help them to achieve. Staff also work closely with schools and young people if there are difficulties with specific issues. For example, they advocate on behalf of young people if they are excluded from school in order to ensure that they are integrated back into education.

Young people benefit from living in a homely environment that is well maintained and comfortably furnished. The home is located in a residential area and there are good public transport links, with access to nearby towns and cities. Young people have individual bedrooms, which they are encouraged to personalise. They do this by helping to choose the decoration and putting up posters and photos. Young people say that staff respect their privacy and one young person stated, 'staff always knock on my door first before coming in to my room'.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people are safe and feel safe. The home meets its responsibility to keep young people safe by making sure that young people's experiences are positive; this ensures the quality of care is consistent. Young people benefit from the clear routines and structures at the home. Young people feel protected and their welfare is promoted at all times.

Young people who do go missing are protected as far as possible and are responded to positively on their return. Young people know and understand that staff always take prompt and early action to ascertain the whereabouts of young people. Staff always initiate procedures and actions that encourages young people to return as

quickly and safely as possible. However, young people rarely go missing. There have been no child protection incidents since the last full inspection and staff are confident with the process of making referrals related to safeguarding matters. The home has effective procedures in place that promote young people's welfare at all times.

One of the main strengths of the home is how successful the staff are in helping young people to behave in a socially-acceptable way. Staff collectively respond to incidents of difficult or challenging behaviour very well so that young people are kept safe. Staff listen to young people and manage their anger and upset in a way that supports young people and defuses difficult situations. There is good evidence that the way they work with young people is helping young people to learn to behave in a socially-acceptable way. This in turn is helping to reduce the number of incidents of physical intervention that are needed. Staff are trained in the use of restraints and clear records are kept of any incident that leads to physical intervention. All young people have a comprehensive care plan with agreed strategies about how behaviour management is achieved. Records show that restraint has been applied less and less, which evidence that young people's behaviour is constantly improving.

The manager makes sure that all new staff are thoroughly vetted before they start work in the home. Young people are involved in the recruitment process and their feedback is seen as an important part of 'belonging to life in the home' and that their views are taken seriously. Staff ensure that the identity of visitors is always checked before they are allowed in. These systems protect young people from unauthorised individuals gaining access to the home.

All potential hazards are identified and either eliminated or minimised. Repairs are attended to promptly and the fire, gas and electrical equipment is regularly checked to make sure that it is in good order. Young people and staff take part in fire drills so that they know what to do in the event of a fire or other emergency. The home itself is kept safe and appropriately secure. Young people's welfare is promoted at all times because the home has robust health and safety procedures that are consistently applied by staff.

Leadership and management

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

The home is effectively and efficiently managed. The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. There is strong, visible leadership which promotes high quality care and positive outcomes for young people. One recommendation made at the previous inspection, requesting that interview notes made during recruitment are kept in individual personnel files, has now been met.

There is a clear Statement of Purpose that accurately describes how the home cares for young people and what services and facilities it provides. There is secure evidence from this inspection that the home works in line with this document. The young person's guide to the service is written in a style that is appropriate to the needs of the young people and it gives them relevant information about how they

will be cared for. It also gives them information about agencies they can contact outside the home if they wish.

Young people receive an excellent standard of care based on their assessed needs from a committed, skilled and competent staff team. There is a strong commitment to provide continuity of care for young people to ensure best practice is maintained. Young people themselves say that they know all of the staff who look after them and they know in advance who is coming on the next shift. A parent, a social worker and an independent reviewing officer said that staff care for young people very well. A parent commented, 'The staff are doing a wonderful job with my daughter'.

Staff feel well supported by the management team and are clear about their roles and responsibilities, which they carry out with enthusiasm. When asked what was the best thing about the home one staff member stated, 'the staff and the young people. Even when there has been incidents and you would not usually look forward to coming to work, I still look forward to coming to work every day'. Other staff comments included: 'I work in all the other homes but do most of my shifts here in this home, as I like the way the home is run. I like the way the staff are supported and they make every effort to help and support the young people'; and 'The care we give the young people is very good, we all work well as a team to ensure each young person is happy and settled in the home'. No member of staff could think about any negative aspects about the home or the care provision.

Staff training and development is seen as important and staff receive a range of training which enables them to meet the diverse needs of young people. Staff receive supervision and there is a clear induction process for new staff, which includes working through the Children's Workforce Development Council induction. Staffing levels are based on the needs of the young people and are flexible to ensure staffing levels can be increased when necessary.

The management team have sound systems in place to ensure robust monitoring is taking place and where there are shortfalls noted, these are rectified quickly. The operations manager is fully involved with the internal politics of the home and she also actively and regularly monitors the quality of care provided, including consultation with young people about their welfare. The home is adequately resourced, indicating the financial viability of the provider.

The home keeps clear records about young people's history and care in the home. Young people are encouraged to read what is written about them and to contribute to their files. Young people's files are well maintained and are kept secure to protect confidentiality. There have been no significant events relating to the protection of young people accommodated in the home since the last full inspection.

Equality and diversity practice is **outstanding**.