

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Caroline Wilson
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home provides short and medium-term residential care for up to five young people with emotional and/or behavioural problems. The home also undertakes outreach work with young people, either to prevent the need for accommodation, or to support them and their carers once they have left the home. This service is provided by a local authority.

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 service for young people. The strength of this home is the staff's genuine interest in promoting the welfare of young people so that they can achieve to the best of their ability. Staff enjoy spending time with young people and have built positive relationships with them. This has proved effective in improving positive behaviour with young people. Young people speak highly of the care that they receive and view the progress that they have made as a direct result of input from staff. Young people feel valued and listened to and feel positive and have high aspirations for their futures. They receive well planned and individualised care where they are safeguarded through the regular monitoring and reviewing of their risk assessments. Young people are regularly consulted with and their views form part of their care planning. Staff view young people positively and this contributes to good outcomes in all areas of young people's lives.

The management structure is strong. They are supported by a highly skilled and competent staff team, who are focused on putting the needs of young people first. Staff work in conjunction with relevant practice guidelines and legislative frameworks. Managers routinely make good use of rigorous monitoring activities relating to the quality of care provided and improving services for young people.

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people make good progress in respect of their individual starting points, particularly relating to their personal and social development. Young people are confident in advocating for themselves during statutory meetings and feel assured in what they can achieve in their lives. They credit their progress as a direct result of input from staff. They feel listened to and valued. This has led to a significant decrease in negative behaviours. Young people make clear career choices and are committed to their educational studies which facilitates their pathway into their chosen field.

Young people are responsible and have a good understanding of a wide range of issues that help them to grow up into well-rounded individuals. Some young people have small pets and have found the responsibility of caring and nurturing a pet beneficial for building their self-esteem. Young people in the younger age range are supported to undertake chores and how to keep good personal hygiene. Older young people, in addition to this, have good knowledge of budgeting and how to maintain good physical, emotional and sexual health. All young people know how to keep themselves safe when out in the community and gave typical examples of how they would do this.

Contact with family members is undertaken in accordance with guidelines set out in care plans. It is also done in a manner which ensures longevity of their relationships so that they can be sustained through to adulthood. For instance, where there are known tensions within family relationships, young people can have family contact at informal events such as barbeques which take place at their home.

Young people help directly in fundraising events and will often prepare cakes and host coffee mornings to raise money for charity. This helps them integrate into the local community as well as gain an understanding of issues in the world around them.

Quality of care

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

Staff have high aspirations for young people in terms of their education. They believe that this is an essential component as good educational outcomes will help them to achieve success in their adult life. Staff are proactive in ensuring that all young people achieve to the best of their ability. Staff have made links with an agency which has a proven track record of engaging young people and enabling them to obtain GCSE qualifications. This is so that there is no delay in a young person without a school placement receiving an education. Staff have ensured that young people who have a school placement fully utilize it by waking them up on time and keeping in contact with the relevant school or college. They help young people to access courses that they are interested in and that they will commit to.

Staff have positive relationships with young people which are based on mutual respect and honesty. Staff are creative in engaging young people to help them to

express their views about the daily living and plans for their future. Key work sessions are held informally, and have a greater success rate in enabling young people to open up and be more receptive to achieving targets set out in their care plans. The home has a talented staff team who possess a range of skills and knowledge that promote good outcomes for young people. Young people are happy to speak to all staff about care issues as well as making use of staff's individual talents to learn essential social and life skills, for instance, in matters such as IT support, playing music or making soup. Staff are skilled in sensitively helping young people to understand why they cannot pursue a course of action that may not be in their best interest. The reasons for reaching any decision are carefully explained to the young person concerned.

The young people's home is warm and welcoming, despite its vast size. There are photographs of the current and previous residents dotted around the living areas. Young people feel part of the home and staff speak affectionately about the good progress that those who have left the home have made, some of whom they still maintain contact with, outside of their outreach role. Bedrooms are personalised to young people's individual tastes.

Formal complaints are rare as any matters that young people are unhappy about are dealt with promptly on an informal basis. Young people are happy with the outcomes as it re-enforces their belief that their views and wishes are taken seriously and acted upon. Staff maintain good relationships with their neighbours. Staff are approachable and this means that any queries or concerns can be addressed before they reach the formal stage.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Staff understand how to help young people to keep safe when they are absent without permission or missing. This is enhanced by their involvement in a number of forums and attendance on courses that consider the risks posed to missing young people. Staff inform young people of the dangers of gang involvement and sexual exploitation. Staff make links with important people in young people's lives as well as the young people, and keep in contact with these when young people are missing from the unit. They have developed the use of code words that young people can use when they are speaking with them that can alert them if young people are in danger. Staff also provide young people with a list of services and support that they can access if they do not feel that they can make direct contact with the home which helps keep them safe. This is in addition to following the protocols in accordance with the Runaway and Missing from Home and Care procedures. Young people are reported missing in a timely manner and are debriefed on their return home so that staff are alert to any concerns that young people may have that may be as a result of the care that they are receiving. Young people who are persistently missing are subject of strategy meetings that identify risk and steps are taken to minimise these.

Staff's knowledge of safeguarding matters is strong. Staff are alert to signs or

symptoms of abuse and will speak with young people if they are worried or concerned when there are changes to young people's demeanour or behaviour. Young people state that this has been beneficial in significantly reducing incidences of self-harm or bullying. Appropriate action is taken by staff in the event of a safeguarding matter being brought to their attention. Staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities that enable them to effectively promote and safeguard the welfare of young people.

All health and safety inspections are undertaken at appropriate intervals. This keeps the environment physically safe and secure and takes into account the needs and characteristics of the young people being cared for.

Leadership and management

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

Leadership and management in the home are strong. The home runs smoothly in the absence of the Registered Manager. There are three deputy managers who support each other, the Registered Manager and staff. Each deputy manager has their allocated tasks, including the individual responsibility for the supervision of designated staff. Supervision is undertaken formally and informally at regular intervals. This is of good quality and keeps staff up to date with changes in legislation and methods of working with young people. Appraisals are held annually and enable staff to identify areas of improvement and to commend them in areas that they are doing well.

The monitoring of the home is effective. It is clear that all documents are monitored and reviewed to identify any themes and patterns that may be impacting on young people's care. The outcome of the monitoring is discussed by staff in team meetings and supervision sessions so that they are aware of their group and individual responsibilities to provide good childcare and outcomes for young people. The internal and external monitoring also keeps staff up to date about the strengths and weaknesses of the home so that they can build on these or take appropriate action where relevant. Quarterly reports identify any shortfalls within the service in order that these can be eliminated.

The home invests in its staff and is committed to providing them with regular and good quality training. In addition to mandatory training in safeguarding, critical matters and risk assessments, staff attend at least five other courses per year. This ensures that they can meet the emotional, physical and individual aspects of caring for young people and increases their knowledge and enhances other areas, such as their personal development. For instance, one member of staff is undertaking a cognitive behaviour therapy course and finds what she has learned beneficial in her work in order to understand and address any areas of concern.

The home strives to continually improve services that they provide. Staff are regularly involved in forums, such as in education, which promotes young people's well-being. Staff are in the process of implementing an independence training plan

which can be individualised to the age and understanding of young people. Staff at the home are also excited at their imminent involvement in a therapeutic course with a reputable mental health establishment which is looking at how to ensure good outcomes for young people in residential settings.

All staff have or are in the progress of completing their level 3 Diploma or equivalent. Nearly half of the staff have a recognised social work qualification. This means that all staff have a good theoretical basis for ensuring that the home is a positive experience for young people, providing them with the support and stability that they need to prepare them for transition to the responsibilities of adulthood. Staff have a high degree of knowledge, skills and are experienced to competently meet young people's needs. They keep themselves up to date with professional, legal and practice developments.

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.