

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Stephen Halliley
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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

This local authority home provides care and accommodation for seven young people from the age of 11 to 18 years old. The home looks after young people who have emotional, behavioural or mild learning difficulties. The service is based on the pedagogic principles of care.

Overall effectiveness

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

The home is highly effective in providing personalised, exceptionally well-planned care for each young person placed. All staff build successful, rewarding relationships with families and other professionals from the outset. Together they establish the individual needs of each young person and make clear and effective plans to support their progress. As a result there are excellent outcomes for all young people.

Young people know they are listened to and that their needs are central to the operation of the home. Their views are consistently positive about the quality of care they receive and the way they are looked after. Staff show, unfailingly, that young people are central to their thinking and the ethos of the home. They show their value of the young people through their attention to detail, commitment to the role and the provision of high quality care to each young person as an individual. The well-decorated and maintained home shows the young people are respected; as does the nature of the positive relationships fostered between staff and young people. Young people are safe and feel safe and are happy to spend quality time with staff developing these relationships and their life skills as they plan for their futures.

Managers are ambitious, focused and energetic in ensuring continuous improvements which benefit the outcomes for young people. They actively and effectively monitor the home and support all staff to provide excellent quality care through training, advice and regular supervision. Key to this success is the managers' attitude of giving staff responsibility for decision making and for highlighting individualised training needs. She utilises these different experiences and skills to provide individualised, focused child-centred practice. The manager is highly visible and accessible within the home but her approach allows staff and young people to flourish in a safe environment.

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people make very significant progress in all aspects of their lives. This includes maintaining attendance at educational placements, educational attainment

and social skills. All young people are in mainstream education and are achieving well with expectations for examination results being high. Both their attendance and their achievements represent outstanding progress from their starting points.

Young people make exceptional progress towards developing their emotional resilience and self-confidence. This is due to the staff treating them with respect, having their needs comprehensively and accurately assessed and their individuality celebrated. The open door access to child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) makes a very significant contribution to young people's progress in developing their emotional health and is invaluable. The extensively resourced and well-stimulating environment helps young people to flourish. Their physical health is very good as they are encouraged to choose healthy diets and adopt active lifestyles, the number of activities offered being varied and interesting. For those with more complex dietary issues CAMHS have provided a specialist eating disorder nurse to give additional input and support. Young people attend meetings to discuss issues including personal hygiene, diet, smoking and general health and they appear to value this advice and support.

Young people are able to meet family and friends in a private room and parents report that the home are very supportive and proactive in facilitating home contact. Young people are happy to talk to staff about their relationships with friends and family. Young people make a positive contribution to the running of the home through group meetings, feedback sheets and being involved on a steering group which also involves members of the local community. They also raise money through charity events towards their own holidays abroad and contribute money from their own monies towards supporting a school in Zimbabwe. During the winter months young people ensure elderly neighbours are safe and well. This developing responsibility for their families, the home and issues affecting those in the wider community shows enormous progress for young people.

Young people are well-prepared for moving towards independence or their next placement. This shows in their participation with staff, other professionals and family members who are working with them towards these goals. Young people show a desire to speak about their wishes and feelings in meetings, work hard on their behaviour in order to maintain stability for their futures and to undertake more independent based skills in the home, though this could be further developed. All young people are involved in the transition planning which is clear and realistic. There is one semi-independent flat available to post 16 year olds who must be engaged in full time education. This further supports the transition process for the more needy young people. As a result young people move on from the home with greater self-confidence, self-awareness and improved opportunities than when they first arrived.

Quality of care

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

Young people enjoy extremely positive relationships with staff and managers who are warm, motivated and supportive towards them. The clear ethos of the home is

child focused and staff work additional hours to foster more fulfilling relationships and provide continuity of care. All staff are fully aware of young people's personal histories and future plans and this enables individualised tailored responses to care plans. This includes supporting his college placements, contact with friends and future plans for young people throughout the county. Young people's input is seen as a vital part of the care planning and review process. Young people contribute effectively to planning their future both before and during the meetings. Staff support young people effectively and this additional confidence ensures young people participate and engage fully, understand the decisions and outcomes and what they have to do to progress towards their individual goals.

Young people are involved and listened to by staff throughout all aspects of daily living. They are regularly consulted on how the service is supporting them through group meetings, 'I want you to know' forms, reviews and a moving on questionnaire. It is clear young people know how to complain and they are confident to do so as they enjoy trusting relationships with staff and managers. They are also very clear they will receive a response from the manager and that actions she says she will take will, without exception, be followed through. At the commencement of their placement young people receive a thorough explanation and written information about complaints and their rights and this is invaluable, especially for those young people who have no previous experience of being in care.

The home provides a very welcoming and well-decorated communal living area, the downstairs has been recently decorated and the first floor communal areas will be redecorated next year. Individual rooms are decorated according to young people's tastes and they have their own photographs, posters and music centres.

Individual health needs are catered for through prompt and well-coordinated access to all health services as necessary.

Staff consistently and unreservedly support young people to prioritise their education. This includes visiting schools to actively pursue the reintegration of young people, having a policy of inviting educators to the home to gain a better understanding of the needs of young people and supporting them with homework on a daily basis. One social worker reports that he was 'extremely pleased with the response from the home, the support they had put in and the 'wrap around' service they had lead' in supporting an individual after a particularly difficult period of ill health. Additionally the home are buying in extra maths and English lessons for a young man who is co-educated at two different colleges to ensure he has access to a complete curriculum. As a result young people are achieving awards and are successfully integrated into mainstream placements and have a high attendance record. This clear prioritisation of education by the staff team ensures young people are fully supported, engaged and achieving in education.

Young people are offered stimulating and exciting opportunities to take part in activities and many take full advantage of these. Staff design these carefully and specifically to individual need and they are intended to broaden young people's horizons through maximising their involvement in community based activities. Young

people attends dance classes, guitar lessons and scouts and all of these involve working with members of the wider community; thus improving understanding of social situations and community participation. Young people are encouraged to enjoy birthday and other cultural celebrations together and, at the time of this visit, the home had been decorated for Christmas. Young people's sense of personal identity is well fostered overall as is their sense of citizenship and social responsibility.

There is good diversity within the staff team in terms of age, gender, ethnicity and experience and this provides young people with a variety of suitable role models and support. There is a clear sense that the young people and their well-being is the unquestionable priority of the staff team. This ensures young people benefit from fair and equal opportunities in both daily living and daily care planning irrespective of their differences.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Safeguarding of young people is a priority of this home and is central to the service it provides. As a result young people say that they feel safe and that they are well supervised. Bullying is not an issue in this home, but there are clear and efficient policies around bullying, safeguarding and behaviour management to support and guide staff in keeping young people safe. Clear, child-focused information is available to help young people understand what constitutes bullying and how they can get help if necessary. Anti-social behaviours are clearly and consistently challenged encouraging an ever developing awareness of socially acceptable behaviour. Internet safety is clearly explained and enforced protecting young people from electronic bullying or abuse. There are excellent channels of communication between parents, schools, health services and the home to ensure they actively and effectively share the care of the young people and protect them from harm. Staff receive ongoing safeguarding training and as a result young people feel safe and are confident about their lives in the home.

Staff help young people take responsibility for their own safety. Regular meetings support young people to consider appropriate choices for their personal safety, for example by openly discussing areas such as bullying, alcohol and substance misuse and risks from smoking.

Practice is informed by assessing and minimising risk without compromising a young person's independence. The home is proactive in taking steps to ensure young people's safety and they work closely with other agencies to ensure this. This includes coordinating police and local authority input within the community to ensure young people are protected from risk presented by members of the public. The role of the home in taking the lead on this is over and above the actions which could reasonably have been taken.

Behaviour management is a strength of this home. Young people's behaviour

management plans give comprehensive guidance to staff about managing anti-social behaviours and are individually focused. Systematic reviewing ensures practice remains informed and that young people receive a service which is flexible to their changing needs and behaviours. There are clear and effective systems in place for staff to follow should young people not return to the home as expected. Staff are proactive in attempting to secure their safe return and comprehensive work is done on their return to reduce risk of further occurrences and ensure their well-being.

Young people are supported to reduce negative behaviours through positive strategies such as writing letters of apology or assisting staff with repairs. Physical intervention is used rarely but effectively. Young people comment on sanctions or physical interventions to help gain an understanding of why unacceptable behaviours need to be challenged. Young people are extremely well protected by this effective behaviour management practice.

Young people are well protected by an effective and robust recruitment process involving comprehensive checks on all staff applying to work with children.

The environment is physically safe and appropriately secure taking account of individual young people's needs. Thorough checks of fire equipment and health and safety promote a safe environment. Fire evacuations are practiced regularly to ensure all can safely exit the home. As a consequence young people are kept safe and have a thorough understanding of how to keep themselves safe.

Leadership and management

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

The management of the home is highly effective. The manager is extremely motivated and supported by a team who are dedicated to providing the best possible outcomes for young people. She is insightful about how the home needs to continue to progress to both fit in with its strategic remit and to continue to improve the service provided. There is a clear development plan in place which shows how the service may change in the coming year. The manager leads by example but also empowers her team to take responsibility for decision making allowing them to learn, where appropriate, from their mistakes. This has seen the development of a confident, competent and highly motivated team who are fully aware of each others' strengths and weaknesses. The sole recommendation from the last inspection has been addressed.

The Statement of Purpose is thorough and details well the focused aims and objectives of the home. Practice is fully in keeping with the statement and what the service offers is clearly understood by all the young people, staff and other professionals.

The home is adequately staffed in terms of numbers and all staff receive a comprehensive training package as part of their induction. The same core training course and qualifications are undertaken by relief staff as well as permanent staff.

This promotes a sense of unity, consistency of care practice and shows the relief staff they are valued as members of the team. Staff receive robust and regular supervision which includes: reflecting on practice to identify learning and personal improvement; focusing on young people's needs with CAMHS support and addressing any concerns.

The manager undertakes detailed and robust monitoring to check records and procedures throughout the service. This ensures best practice is maintained in the key areas of health and safety, child protection and behaviour management. All records seen were of a high standard and were legible, current and detailed sufficient for their purpose. Confidentiality of recording was observed and systems in place supported this. The service is effectively managed and supports, motivates and values staff thus ensuring young people continue to receive high quality care.

Equality and diversity practice is **outstanding**.