

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Louisa Bayley
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This 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 and behavioural difficulties. It is owned by the 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**.

Young people in this home benefit from a stable, nurturing and high-warmth environment. Staff provide personalised, respectful care that supports young people to build strong attachments and develop a sense of feeling loved. Young people make good progress, despite their complex needs and the challenges they face.

Young people have positive views of the staff and the care they receive. They say they have good relationships with staff who give them the support they need. Young people feel that staff actively seek their views and act upon them. Staff encourage young people to take an active part in their care planning, and express their views about the way they are cared for. Consequently, young people develop the confidence to make their views known or allow staff to advocate on their behalf.

Young people say they feel safe in the home. Staff acknowledge the risks that young people present to themselves and work hard to achieve risk reduction. External professionals confirm that risk-taking behaviour has reduced as young people have settled into the home. They identify that the strength of relationships between young people and staff is fundamental to the progress individuals make.

The management team have good awareness of the strengths of the home and the areas they would like to develop further. The whole staff team strive for continuous improvement. They show a genuine commitment to providing high quality care for young people.

The inspection identified minor shortfalls, two of which related to documentation.

The admissions and discharge register does not provide the full information required and the young people's guide contains information which is out of date. The independent visitor does not currently make contact with parents to gain their view of the care provided by the home. The shortfalls do not in any way compromise the care that young people receive or impact on their progress.

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
5 (2001)	keep under review and, where appropriate, revise the statement of purpose and the children's guide; notify the Commission HMCI of any such revision within 28 days and supply a copy to each child accommodated in the home (Regulation 5 (a) (b) (c))	31/01/2014
29 (2001)	maintain in the children's home the records specified in Schedule 4 and ensure that they are kept up to date, with specific regard to the admissions and discharge register (Regulation 29 (1) Schedule 4 (1))	31/01/2014
33 (2001)	ensure that the person carrying out visits under Regulation 33 interviews, with their consent and in private, such of the children accommodated there, their parents, relatives and persons working at the home as appears necessary in order to form an opinion of the standard of care provided in the home. (Regulation 33 (4) (a))	31/01/2014

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people develop and sustain positive relationships with the adults who care for them. As their relationships develop, young people become more confident and self-aware. For some individuals, they learn for the first time what it means to have someone who cares for them and puts them first. An external professional said: 'I have seen some significant improvements in the emotional development of many of the young people.' As young people's confidence grows, they learn to manage destructive behaviours and gain greater awareness of keeping themselves safe.

Young people access the health services they need to promote their physical and mental health. As they have grown in confidence, they have started to engage with a

range of specialists, despite their initial reluctance. Young people take responsibility for their health by making and attending medical and health appointments. The support they receive from health professionals helps them to make safe choices and to reduce putting themselves at risk of harm.

Records in the home, discussion with the staff and with external professionals demonstrate that young people make progress in their educational attendance and achievement. Some young people did not attend any educational provision before their placement in the home; others had sporadic attendance and low levels of engagement. All young people have education packages that meet their individual needs, readiness for learning and stages of academic and emotional development. They have achieved qualifications at GCSE level; participate in the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme and are on track to achieve other nationally recognised qualifications. An external professional described a young person as 'really turning a corner educationally'.

Young people contribute to the running of the home; expressing their views, making suggestions about activities, menus and holidays. They take an active part in fund raising and they welcome neighbours and members of the local community into the home for special events. Young people take groceries to elderly neighbours in poor weather. In building links with members of the community, they develop an understanding of the needs of others.

Each young person has arrangements in place to promote contact with those who are important to them, with due consideration to any restrictions in place. Young people bring their friends into the home and have opportunities to spend time with them in a welcoming environment. They can invite their friends and partners to events hosted in the home, such as Christmas parties. Consequently, young people have regular opportunities to socialise with their friends and people who are important to them.

Young people who are preparing to move on benefit from learning independence skills that will be important to them in their adult life. They utilise the facilities in the independence flat and work with external professionals to complete specialist programmes. This means they develop self-reliance in a supportive environment.

Quality of care

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

Staff in this home have genuinely warm and caring relationships with the young people. External professionals working with the home are extremely positive about the care provided by the staff. One said: 'All the staff have the children's best interests at heart and try extremely hard to protect them.' Young people can identify staff they trust and can talk to about any aspect of their lives.

Throughout the inspection, the interactions between young people and staff were highly positive and respectful. They mirrored the relationships you would expect to see between good parents and their children.

All young people know how to make a complaint. They utilise the complaints system to raise issues and the manager or senior staff ensure there is a written response to the individual. The use of the complaints system demonstrates young people's confidence in raising issues with staff. The majority of complaints relate to peer interactions. Young people say that staff deal with issues as they arise and they are satisfied with the outcomes. Staff encourage young people to express their views about poor behaviour and how it makes them feel. Staff support and mediate discussions and consequently, young people learn to develop social awareness within group living.

Young people contribute their views through regular meetings in the home, as well as on a day-to-day basis. The quality of the meetings is high, with detailed and informative minutes. The way staff manage and record the meetings gives them value and puts worth on to individual's view and opinions. Where staff cannot accommodate young people's wishes, they clearly explain why. This further supports young people's sense of feeling listened to, even when some actions are not possible.

Individual care is based on regular review and assessment of young people's individual needs. Planning considers religious and cultural needs and promotes individual's development of their self-view and understanding of their background. Young people complete their own basic care plan, from their own perspective. Staff complete key work sessions with young people in a format that suits the individual. A recent introduction of key work core group meetings has strengthened the way staff review and document young people's progress. The format ensures that key staff have time to reflect on individual's needs and raise further actions to ensure that young people can meet their goals. Staff encourage young people to attend meetings and statutory reviews, so they can put forward their views and wishes. All staff are highly knowledgeable about the young people, ensuring they all deliver personalised care that supports individual progress.

Staff are proactive in engaging a range of external professionals to promote young people's emotional, physical and mental health and well-being. Staff respect young people's wishes in regard to attending health appointments and where requested, go with individuals to support them. The manager ensures that staff are well equipped to meet young people's health needs. She arranges for external professionals to meet with the staff, to give them guidance and strategies that promote good outcomes for young people.

External professionals say that staff are proactive in supporting young people's educational attendance and engagement. One said: 'Staff are superb at supporting young people in their education. They set expectations of educational attendance and engagement and they understand the levels individuals are working at. The staff support them in the home to achieve.' The manager has appealed against permanent exclusions, advocating strongly on behalf of young people to enable them to access their educational entitlement. Staff work with a visiting tutor and support the education programme he delivers to young people. Young people live in a home

where there is a culture of high expectation and educational aspiration.

Staff facilitate a range of leisure opportunities for young people. They listen to young people's views and plan trips accordingly. Throughout the year, staff organise significant events, based on young people's wishes. The staff arranged a summer holiday, a trip to a music festival, visited Winter Wonderland in London and organised a Christmas party. Young people engage well and enjoy activities they would not otherwise have the chance to experience.

The accommodation is very well appointed and decorated. There is a high degree of young people's personalisation, with their choices of décor incorporated into colour schemes. The accommodation provides a warm, homely environment, with enough space for young people to spend time in groups or on their own if they wish. New young people benefit from freshly decorated rooms and welcoming touches. The home is presented in a way that makes young people feel valued and well looked after.

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. External professionals say staff safeguard young people very well and they 'respond to incidents by following appropriate protocols and procedures'. There are good risk management plans in place in response to high level, concerning behaviours. The manager is proactive in communicating with a range of professionals to ensure that there is a multi-agency approach to managing concerns.

Some young people present with significant risk taking behaviours. The manager is clear about her responsibility to ensure that the home can safely manage these risks.

Staff manage incidents of bullying by supporting young people to reflect on their behaviour and the impact it has on others. Young people and social workers say that staff address issues and support young people to resolve them. Some staff have accessed additional training on responding to bullying. They have cascaded their learning to the team and implemented strategies and approaches to reduce the number of incidents. They work with young people to develop their understanding of what constitutes bullying behaviour, differentiating this from one-off incidents.

New admissions to the home in May 2013 resulted in an increase in incidents of missing from care and unauthorised absence. The manager and staff have worked closely with the police to ensure that vulnerable young people are protected. There are agreed protocols in place and the staff have strong relationships with the police. The nature of young people's complex needs, coupled with their move to this home, has meant that it has taken some time for them to settle in and develop relationships with the staff. As those relationships have developed, young people have been able to build their trust in the adults who care for them. Consequently, incidents of missing have levelled off and then decreased. There have been no incidents of

missing in the last four weeks. Individuals have stopped returning to places that pose a risk to their safety. Young people have learned that the staff care about them and need to know where they are. For some this was a new concept; they had not recognised in the early stages, that they were actually missing. Staff have been able to raise young people's awareness of safety and danger. The work that staff have undertaken with young people has significantly contributed to the decrease in the number of incidents.

The last incident of restraint was in May 2012. This indicates that staff manage behaviour well through de-escalation, effective sanctions and reflection. The records of sanctions demonstrate that staff support young people to understand why their behaviours are negative and the impact their behaviour has on others. Individuals make suggestions as to how they can make reparation for their actions. This promotes their engagement in acknowledging and addressing their behaviour.

There are robust safe recruitment procedures in place. Comprehensive records reflect that checks are in place. Safe care interviews prior to appointment help to establish candidate's motivations for working with young people. The procedures in place help to prevent unsuitable people accessing and working in the home.

There are regular checks in place to monitor the health and safety requirements and arrangements in the home. The staff receive fire instruction training as do young people. All young people and staff have been involved in fire evacuations. An external company checks fire fighting equipment, which is certified as meeting requirements. The portable appliance testing, gas and electrical checks are up to date. There is a positive relationship between the home and the fire service, who attend the home to educate young people about risks of fire setting and triggering false fire alarms. The checks in place contribute to keeping young people safe.

Leadership and management

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

The manager of this home is registered with Ofsted and has the qualifications and experience to effectively lead the staff team. She has a strong management team in place. The whole team are committed to improving young people's life chances and providing high quality care. A professional working with the home said: 'there is a dedicated core of staff who show progressive thinking. I find the staff much more open to change; the needs of children are being met.'

There have been no concerns received by Ofsted. The manager addressed and resolved two complaints from neighbours and there have been no further issues since August 2013.

The interim inspection did not identify any regulatory shortfalls. In the time since the last inspection, the manager has driven improvement in staff supervision and the structure of the management team. Two of the senior staff are completing their level five diplomas, enhancing their knowledge and skills. External professionals reflect

that there has been improvement in the way the home operates. One said: 'During this past year, the way the home thinks and approaches individual needs has really taken off.'

The statement of purpose is up to date and accurately reflects the provision offered. However, the young people's guide contains some information that is out of date, giving young people an inaccurate view of the previous inspection judgement.

External monitoring takes place on a monthly basis and is submitted to Ofsted within the specified timescales. The independent visitor considers the views of young people and staff but does not take account of the views of parents.

The manager carries out internal monitoring on a monthly basis, and a full review of the quality of care every six months. The regular monitoring ensures that the manager identifies any shortfalls and puts actions in place to address them. The manager has a development plan in place, with targets identified that will further enhance the care provision.

Recently introduced review and recording systems demonstrate the value that living in the home has on young people. The key work core group meeting format is in its infancy but is already providing a useful overview of young people. It helps to clearly identify and document individual progress, targets and goals.

The home is very well presented. There is a dedicated handy man, which helps to ensure a prompt response to damage or issues affecting the physical environment. Where young people cause damage, they often choose to help make repairs. This promotes young people's sense of pride in their home.

Staff in the home are qualified to a minimum of level three. They receive regular training in safeguarding, restraint, first aid and food hygiene. Staff say they access additional training to support them to meet young people's needs, for example in managing bullying and self-harming. Staff receive regular supervision and feel able to access management support at any time. Additionally, the manager supports staff to develop professionally, including undertaking social work qualifications. Consequently, staff are able to keep up to date with professional developments.

The records in the home are professionally recorded and stored confidentially. However, there is a shortfall in the admissions and discharge register as it does not consistently include the address of young people prior to admission.

The manager ensures that she notifies Ofsted of significant events, as per regulatory requirements. This ensures Ofsted has a current view of events in the home regarding matters of young people's safety and well-being.

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.