

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Roy Bega
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home is owned and managed by a local authority. It is registered to provide care and accommodation for no more than four young people who have complex behavioural and emotional needs.

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 **outstanding**.

Young people thrive in a warm, homely, family environment tailored to meet their individual needs. They are kept safe and are very well supported by a committed and motivated staff team. Positive professional relationships with staff promote confidence and reassurance within young people that their needs are focused on at all times.

Excellent support is provided for meeting health care and developmental needs. Education is highly valued and achievements are very well supported and celebrated. Young people are actively encouraged to make their views known about their care plans and their experience of life in the home. They benefit from extensive support through which they maintain or re-build appropriate contact with persons important to them.

An experienced, dedicated, stable and trained staff team provide consistent care for young people. A cohesive management team is resourceful in providing substantial staff support and training. Excellent systems are in place to monitor the quality of care in the home with management and staff being well motivated in examining and improving practice.

There are not any requirements or recommendations for improvement raised resulting from this inspection.

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **outstanding**.

Young people make excellent progress in relation to their starting points and thrive in a supportive, stable, caring environment which offers consistent boundaries. They develop in self-confidence, emotional resilience and view the service as their own home.

Young people are listened to and are supported to express themselves. This was demonstrated through staff actively supporting a young person to make decisions about their personal appearance and recognising the advantages to keeping their room tidy. Young people are routinely consulted on aspects of their daily living, such as what activities to do and décor of the home. Group and individual work is used to ensure young people understand when their wishes cannot be met and the reasons for this. Comments received included, 'I chose a lot of the new furniture for the garden,' 'I can have a lot of say about what goes on,' 'I am able to talk to any staff at any time about thing in the home and 'We have house meetings where things get written down. We talk about things like, food, activities, mates, going out, things we do wrong and the decoration of the home.'

Young people enjoy good health because they are motivated to take responsibility for their own medical and health needs. Their development of self-esteem and understanding about their emotional and mental well-being aids their recognition about their health needs and increases their ability to have fun. They are aware how lifestyle choices can impact on their health, for example, balanced eating, exercise, understanding sexual health, better personal hygiene and the effects of smoking. Young people also understand how to access a variety of health agencies that will support their medical needs and give advice about lifestyle choices.

Young people are consulted on menus with the emphasis on young people making home cooked foods. Healthy eating is promoted through posters and activities, such as a 'Come Dine with Me' evenings where each young person devises and cooks their own menu. Young people experience a range of foods from different cultures and the healthy living theme continues through to them leading active lifestyles through a variety of activities within the community. These include, the gymnasium, basketball, going on walks, dance and participating in charitable events such as 'Run for Life', which promotes young people's self-worth and sense of belonging. Medication is stored appropriately and there is a robust system to ensure safety when administering medicines. In case of emergency, there are qualified first aiders on site at all times.

Young people's educational achievements and school/college attendance is exceptional taking into account their attainment level at the commencement of their placement and subsequent progress. They appreciate the support and guidance given by staff who are proud of them and care about their futures. Key workers talk to them about the importance of school, going to college and being able to get a job. They feel good about themselves as they are consistently congratulated and rewarded for their efforts and achievements. Discussions with young people provided the following responses, 'I've been captain of the school football team and helped

younger kids', 'I enjoy singing and dancing. I've helped out at school when a show has been put on and helped with younger girls,' I am pleased when I do things well at school. When not doing good staff help me', 'I am now doing alright at school, have got certificates for geography' and 'I have been in a bit of bother at school but staff are helping me sort things'.

Young people benefit from being central to the placement planning process and the comprehensive and inclusive plans demonstrate this. Young people know how they will be cared for and what the plan is for them. Successes are celebrated creatively by certificates, rewards and displays at statutory review meetings. Plans are continually monitored and updated to reflect the changing needs of the young person. This is done in consultation with the young person, social workers, parents and other significant people in their lives. Comments received include, 'I have a great key worker who I talk about private things with', 'I like staying here cause my life is being sorted' and 'I am asked about what things should go in my care plan.'

Where appropriate young people freely make contact with family members and friends. This was evident during the inspection when one young person went out to meet up with their girlfriend and another with their mates. They are also aware of the reasoning when it is necessary to agree planned and supervised contact with their families. These include visits to the home, telephone contact, and planned overnight stays with parents. Exceptional staff commitment in providing emotional and practical support enables young people to maintain and, in some instances, re-establish relationships with their families in planning a possible return home.

Young people develop age appropriate self-care and practical independent living skills, achieved by the excellent support and the clear routines and expectations that are in place. When young people move on from the home it is in a planned way; young people achieve very successful transitions into independence. They build on the social networks they have been supported to establish while at the home and maintain their education. Even when young people choose to leave in an unplanned way they maintain contact with the home and use the support of staff to move their lives forward.

Quality of care

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

Young people are cared for in line with their detailed and comprehensive placement plans. Individual needs are identified and well understood by staff. Young people have a clear understanding regarding the aims of their placement and what they need to achieve those aims. Comments from young people include, 'I can read what is said about me at any time', 'I go through written stuff with my key worker' and 'I go to reviews and have a say what happens to me and have it put on my care plan.' A placing authority social worker commented 'when I see my young person, they say to me that they are happy and that the staff respond to them well.'

Young people benefit from outstanding supportive relationships with staff that are

based on mutual respect. Interaction is generally informal and good humoured with appropriate boundaries being maintained. Young people describe staff as being, 'cool' and 'brilliant' and express confidence in being able to talk through problems with them.

There are well-established forums including regular residents' meetings and key working sessions. Young people use these to express their views on aspects of how the home is organised and run. They confirm that this helps them learn to negotiate and develop confidence in expressing themselves. They also say that they are listened to and their views are valued in effecting changes on matters that are important to them. Comments from young people include, 'we can't always get what we ask for, sometimes we have to wait or help save up for it' and 'my key worker tells me when my review is and helps me go over what it is about and how important it is to be there.' Placement plans show evidence of the young people's input with comments and signatures added. A placing authority social worker commented 'I am extremely happy with the service provided for the young people. The staff are always professional and they put the young people first.'

Young people know how to report any concerns but rarely make use of the formal complaints process. They have confidence in taking issues directly to staff and feel listened to. Staff are supportive and proactive in helping young people raise issues with agencies and organisations outside of the home. Comments received include, 'when I have a moan staff deal with it quickly' and, 'I know I can't always have what I want but I have to have a go. When I do staff are always fair and explain things.'

Management and staff are vibrant in promoting young people's physical and emotional well-being and welfare. Young people are encouraged to routinely attend appointments with their doctor, dentist and opticians. They also benefit from having access to a range of specialist services providing medical and psychological support. Staff have excellent knowledge of the home's robust procedures for the storage, administration and recording of medication.

Education is positively promoted and young people are rewarded for regular attendance and commitment. Care staff work closely with schools to ensure they are conversant regarding the educational abilities and goals of each young person. Staff are proactive in advocating for educational opportunities for young people. Young people confirm staff talk with them about their aspirations and academic strengths and liaise with teaching staff to improve their life chances. Examples of comments young people made include, 'staff help me with my education' and, 'I meet weekly with my key worker to discuss what I think is or is not happening.' Relevant work experience opportunities are actively sought by both care and education staff to ensure young people have the best opportunities for entering the world of employment.

Young people are actively encouraged by staff to participate in suitable leisure activities within the home and the wider community. Staff promote new experiences aimed at providing the opportunity for young people to learn new skills, develop new interests and gain confidence. Comments made by young people include, 'staff are

always trying to get me to do different things.'

Management and staff are highly active in ensuring that diversity is celebrated and valued, while being resourceful in challenging any form of discrimination. High regard is given to young people's particular needs arising from their heritage, culture, or linguistic backgrounds. Young people have equal access to all of the opportunities provided by the home. Comments received from young people include, 'they treat me as me' and 'I'm helped to do what I'm interested in.'

Young people's privacy and dignity is well respected. A house telephone enables young people to make private calls where appropriate. Young people benefit from having a private and secure room in which to enjoy their personal space. Comments received from young people include, 'I was told about my right to privacy when I moved in and it is in the welcome information', 'I can go to my room whenever' and 'staff know when I want to be on my own and always knock on my door and wait to be asked to come in.'

The home is decorated and furnished to a standard which creates a domestic homely environment. Young people are proud of their surroundings and have been actively involved in the choice of décor and the personalisation of their rooms with possessions and posters. There is an excellent maintenance and repair programme for the building. Any reported faults are swiftly rectified by the authority's own maintenance team. A placing social worker commented, 'this is one of the best homes I have had a working relationship with and so homely.'

Safeguarding children and young people

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

All young people are safe and say that they feel safe living in the home. The excellent relationships between all associated with the home ensures that young people always have a trusted adult they can talk to. Allegations or disclosures are taken very seriously by staff who are trained and confident in the use of the procedures. Staff are especially astute at identifying and considering risks for each young person in relation to their diverse needs and in relation to the group living arrangements; these are documented and reviewed when circumstances change.

Effective action is taken in relation to the potential for bullying. Bullying is rare in this home because of the high level of personal respect each young person and member of staff has for each other. In the rare event of bullying occurring this is treated very seriously and dealt with very effectively. Both the bully and the bullied are very well supported and detailed work is carried out with the bully to ensure they really understand about bullying and its effects.

The arrangements for promoting positive behaviour are extremely effective. Young people are clear about these arrangements and are fully committed to them. While sometimes behaviours are not in line with expectations young people are aware and

understand the consequences of this. The recording of sanctions for unacceptable behaviour however, need to be clearer to avoid possible misunderstandings.

Young people are involved in setting their own behavioural targets which supports the development of a sense of responsibility for their own actions. Physical restraint is rarely used and clear records are maintained of any incidents. Young people are clear that physical restraint is used as a last resort and only used to protect them or other people from harm or damage to property. All of the young people feel that staff follow all the rules all the time showing that they feel there is a strong sense of fairness. Young people rarely go missing from the home because they feel safe and cared for. Clear arrangements, including protocols with the police and young people's placing authority, are followed should this occur.

Young people live in a very safe and very well-maintained environment that supports all of their developmental needs. The investment in the home in terms of décor, furnishings and equipment is exceptional; this sends a clear message to young people that they are valued.

Staff working with young people in the home are carefully selected and vetted. The robust recruitment process ensures that suitable people who have the ability to care effectively for the young people and invest in the ethos of the home are employed.

Leadership and management

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

This is a home that shows a consistently high level of commitment in providing excellent, bespoke care to children and young people. An infectious enthusiasm for the duty of care permeates from the strategic level right across the whole staff team. The Registered Manager leads her staff with a high level of professionalism and passion and values the input of staff at all levels. She provides very effective leadership to the staff teams and has a strong sense about how she can further develop the already excellent care. She is open to new ideas and implements these in line with children and young people's diverse and often competing needs.

The home is effectively monitored externally and by the manager which ensures that success is celebrated and areas for development are identified. Young people's views are gathered and fed into the business planning. To further improve the monitoring aspects of the service the manager is considering a more integrated approach to using the monitoring information. A clear Statement of Purpose underpins the work in the home and the home operates in line with this. A professional who has a child placed commented of the manager and staff, 'nothing is too much trouble for them.'

The home is exceptionally well resourced, in all areas. For example the environment, the equipment, the staffing arrangements and the services commissioned are resourced to ensure that the highest quality of care is provided to each young person at all times. The ways in which staff teams work provide young people with a high level of continuity. There is a relatively stable long-serving group of staff, some of

whom have been in post for several years.

Staff are of an exceptionally high calibre and all are totally focused on meeting each child's specific needs. Staff are extremely well supported in their, sometimes difficult, task via: regular and good quality supervision; effective and relevant training; team meetings and group supervision for the therapeutic work carried out. Less formally the manager is extremely supportive of the staff and they all speak very highly of her support and of her compassion for her role.

A young person said of the staff 'I am happy with what they do' and another stated that the home, 'is amazing.' Comments from placing social workers about the staff include, 'I am happy with what they do', 'the homeliness of the home and the warmth of the manager and her staff has helped the young person grow, develop and become far more stable. They always go one step beyond to ensure their needs are met.' and 'I would not hesitate to recommend this excellent home to anyone thinking of placing. It has an excellent reputation within this local authority.'

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.