

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Roy Bega
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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 is owned and managed by a local authority. It is registered to provide care and accommodation for no more than four young people. The service provides care and accommodation for young people who have complex behavioural and emotional needs and/or whose present accommodation or care arrangements render them in need or at risk of significant harm. It provides a community based residential service designed to improve family relationships and prevent the need for the child or young person to leave their home except for planned periods of residential care and to provide support for families to enable them to continue caring for their child.

Overall effectiveness

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

Young people thrive in a warm 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 in that their needs are focused on at all times.

Excellent support is provided for the meeting of 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 in maintaining or re-building appropriate contact with persons important to them.

The home has an experienced, dedicated and stable staff team who provide consistent care for young people. A cohesive management team are 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.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the service should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure that staff have appropriate training if they are required to supervise and facilitate contact (NMS 9.2).

Outcomes for children and young people

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

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

Young people enjoy good health being motivated in taking responsibility for their own medical and health needs. The development of self-esteem and understanding about emotional and mental well-being aids the recognition and 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 effect 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 peoples educational achievement 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.

Young people make decisions about their placement plans, reviews and running of the home. They feel confident to say what they think, can read what is said about them and sign records. Staff support them to become involved in monthly house meetings and weekly key worker sessions. A lot of discussion also takes place during social occasions such as meal time. They enjoy discussing a wide range of things including food, personal activities in the local community, holidays, sanctions/house rules and the decoration of the home.

Where appropriate young people freely make contact with family members and friends. This was evident during the inspection when a young person met with a class mate to complete a school project informing staff when they would be back. 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 view preparation to move into adulthood and be independent as an important part of their individual placement plans. Transitional arrangements which cover all areas for moving on into independent living, adult life or alternative

accommodation are meticulously discussed and planned with young people. All of the young people are involved in independence programmes which include budgeting, menu planning, healthy eating and other practical house hold skills. During the visit one young person readily enjoyed practicing their culinary skills in preparing lunch, explaining what they were cooking and how they menu plan. The resulting meal was enjoyed by all those who dined. Staff are dedicated to keeping in touch with young people once they have moved on. This often results in some young people returning for social visits. Others prefer to stay in touch by means of phone calls or other forms of correspondence.

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 support worker' and 'I go to reviews and have a say what happens to me and have it put on my care plan.'

Young people benefit from outstanding supportive relationships with staff that are based on mutual respect. Interaction is generally informal, 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 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.

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 doctors, 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 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 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', 'I enjoy going to the gym' and 'I love shopping for clothes'.

Management and staff are highly active in ensuring that diversity is celebrated and valued, whilst 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 company's own maintenance team.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

safe.

Staff take positive steps to ensure that the young people live in a safe, secure and caring environment. They attend training and have access to clear information about child protection and safeguarding requirements. As a result, they demonstrate a confident understanding of the action to take should they have any concerns about a young person's safety or well-being

Young people feel safe, secure and well cared for. They appreciate that one of the strengths of the home is how staff actively help them to mature and progress in a way that motivates them in managing their own behaviour and to control their anger. Staff enable young people to understand that it is not necessarily in their best interest to always have what they want and explain why. Young people emphasise that while this might annoy them, it also makes them feel safe and cared for. Staff are trained in approved control, de-escalation and restraint techniques and conversant in their use. Restraint is used rarely 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. Opportunities are provided at any time for young people to discuss how they feel and to talk about any issues worrying them following any sanction, restraint or incident of going missing. Comments from young people include, 'I'm aware of what I can and cannot do. I feel the rules are fair and fairly applied by staff', 'when I've gone off on one it is talked through afterwards' and 'they are helping me to sort out my problems.'

Bullying is not a concern and young people are confident that staff will address any incidents swiftly to ensure they remain safe. Young people confirm any issues of conflict are dealt with immediately and effectively.

Incidents where young people go missing are very infrequent due to the close supervision from staff. Staff are very aware of the young people's vulnerabilities and are very clear what action to take should such an incident occur, which include good protocols with the police. Comments from young people include, 'I've not bunked off since being at the home' and 'I have no reason to run off, I like it here.'

The physical environment is safe, appropriately secure and well maintained taking account of the needs and characteristics of young people cared for. There are established systems and structures to maintain safe practices and fulfil health and safety obligations. There are robust fire safety arrangements which include staff and young people being familiar with the actions they should take in the case of a real fire.

Young people benefit from a stable staff team. Staff working in the home are carefully selected and vetted. The home has suitably robust procedures in place including a systematic approach that ensures that the company's policy and practice is effective. Staff commented that they went through a rigorous selection and interview process and did not commence working until an enhanced Criminal Records Bureau check had been successfully completed.

Leadership and management

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

A real strength of this home is a cohesive, well experienced and forward thinking management and care staff team. The manager of the home is experienced, appropriately qualified and supported by a dedicated staff team who are versatile and have a commitment to constantly improve care practices. Staff reported, 'I am happy with the work I do, we all work very well together and can totally rely on each other.' Another stated, 'I feel valued and we work hard to make sure the young people get the life they deserve.'

Staff are provided with an excellent range of training, including mandatory courses in safeguarding, first aid and the administration of medication. The manager of the home ensures that time is available for all staff to attend training, which further promotes the welfare of the young people. All staff working at the home have a qualification in caring for children or are working towards it. Comments received include, 'my training needs are a fixed item for my supervision', 'I am being well supported in completing formal child care training' 'we have annual refresher training in the mandatory areas such as child protection'. The manager acknowledges it is best practice to provide appropriate training for staff who supervise contact between young people and family members.

Young people appreciate a staffing structure which has clear lines of accountability in providing a stable living environment. High staffing levels are maintained in line with the home's policy to ensure that young people are properly supervised and able to take part in structured and non-structured activities. Staff are deployed with sufficient time to undertake individual work with young people, to attend regular team meetings and to complete necessary paperwork. All staff have regular monthly supervision sessions with their line manager, which ensures that their development and training needs are identified and promoted. Staff commented, 'management are very supportive and provide excellent supervision' and 'I receive outstanding guidance and professional input'.

The manager and staff demonstrate a strong commitment to reviewing and improving the service that is offered to young people and their families. Team meetings are used to look at practice issues and the needs of the young people. This ensures that all staff are aware of any issues relating to young people's behaviour and approaches in meeting them are consistent. The home has monthly Regulation 33 inspections which report the quality of care provided and records any shortfalls, to which the manager promptly responds. Highly detailed quarterly Regulation 34 monitoring reports forms part of the quality assurance for the improvement and development plan of the home.

Excellent administrative arrangements are in place for supporting young people's care. These arrangements ensure each young person's exclusive and confidential records are maintained securely and include all the information necessary to plan

and deliver their care. Records are carefully organised to permit ease of access to particular information which provides young people with ready access on request.

Equality and diversity practice is **outstanding**.