

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. 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.

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 grow and develop in a homely environment tailored to meet their individual needs. They are kept safe and are very well supported by a committed and consistent staff team who build strong relationships with the young people and focus on their individual needs at all times.

Excellent support is provided for the meeting of health care and developmental needs. Education is valued and achievements are very well supported and celebrated. Young people are positively encouraged to make their views known about their care plans and their experience of life in the home. Young people benefit from support structured to make contact between young people and their families an enjoyable and meaningful experience.

The home has an experienced and stable staff team which is very well managed, trained and supported so that they are able to provide very consistent care for young people. Excellent systems are in place to monitor the quality of care in the home and the staff are always keen to examine and improve practice.

The one recommendation carried forward from the previous full inspection in November 2011 regarding staff training is assessed as being met. There are no requirements or recommendations raised resulting from this inspection.

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people enjoy excellent and constructive relationships with staff and are supported to build relationships with their peers. A young person commented that staff and young people have 'healthy relationships'. Another said that he 'likes staff because they do stuff with you'.

Young people are listened to and are supported to express themselves. This was demonstrated where staff were actively supporting a young person to make decisions about their personal appearance and advantages of 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.

Young people enjoy good health and are motivated to take responsibility for their own medical and health needs. The development of self-esteem and understanding about their emotional and mental well-being aids their ability to have fun. They are aware how lifestyle choices can impact on their health; for example, balanced eating, exercise, understanding sexual health, good personal hygiene and the effect of smoking. Young people confirm staff are very approachable, listen to them and are understanding and supportive in ensuring their health needs are met. Comments made included, 'staff are always prepared to listen to my problems at any time', 'they are sorting me out', 'I am now more confident in doing things' and 'I can now talk about things that happened in the past.'

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 eating theme continues to 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 self-worth and a sense of belonging. Medication is stored appropriately and there is a robust system to ensure safety when administering. In case of emergency, there are qualified first aiders on site at all times.

Young people excel within education in relation to their starting point on moving into the home. Staff consistently have realistic aspirations for the young people and support their educational placements with robust communication between home and school staff. This provides a great continuum of care with those moving on from school being supported to attend local colleges and employment. One young person described the support as 'absolutely fantastic'.

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.

In an open group discussion with the inspector young people commented, 'you better give us outstanding because this is our home and we like it here'.

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. Where moving on takes place in a planned way young people achieve very successful transitions to independence. They build on the social networks they have been supported to establish while at the home and maintain 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 forward.

Quality of care

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

Young people fully understand the rules and boundaries that are set. While these are not always adhered to young people are aware of, and accept, the consequences of negative behaviour and rule breaking and learn and grow from the experiences. The home is exceptionally good at ensuring that young people understand why they may have behaved in a less than acceptable way, why they should not repeat this behaviour and how they can better deal with a situation in the future.

Young people's views, about all aspects of their individual care needs, the needs of the group and the needs of the staff are viewed as very important. Views are sought through various means, including the after school discussions. These are very positive moments during which achievements for the day are celebrated. The less positive aspects of a young person's day are also considered in a sensitive way and encouragement is given for the next day. The weekly young people's meetings provide a positive forum for them to put forward their wishes and feeling about the day-to-day care in the home, such as the menu planning. Young people are supported to attend their statutory reviews and have their views heard. A visiting professional commented, 'there is a real sense that staff and the manager are wanting the best for young people.' All of the young people know how to make a complaint. In reality the formal complaints procedure is little used as issues get sorted on a daily basis before they become a big issue. This is achieved because young people are confident they will be listened to and heard.

There is a clear ethos, within professional boundaries, of this being a 'family group' living arrangement in which the needs of all people matter. This provides the young people with a real sense of responsibility for themselves and their behaviour and the needs of others living and working in the home. Each young person and member of

staff feels valued and respected.

Young people have exceptional support to attend and achieve in learning opportunities; they all take up these opportunities. The expectations for attendance and achievement are high and young people show a keen interest in achieving well in their formal education and in the many less formal learning opportunities provided. Staff are interested in their school work and celebrate achievements such as any caring parent. Staff have realistic expectations of young people and encourage all of them to achieve and reach their full potential.

Less formal but just as important learning opportunities are provided to each young person in line with his or her interests and skills. Integration into the local community is seen as key to helping young people become useful members of society. While there are many group activities for all of the young people these are carefully managed to ensure that activities are in line with ages and abilities. Young people are seen as individuals and are supported to join various clubs and teams that interest them, such as local football, basketball, dance and youth clubs. Staff are very insightful about ensuring that each young person is comfortable with their attendance. For example, where possible the member of staff a young person wants to take them to the activity does so. A professional visiting said, 'the opportunities offered to young people are exceptional, which enables them to gain new experiences in their lives'.

The home is exceptionally well-presented and maintained. It provides a very comfortable, homely and child-friendly environment. There is a very high level of personalisation throughout the house. Young people are involved in things like choosing the décor and soft furnishings. The kitchen/diner walls are covered with positive images of them and of past residents that reinforce positive views of diversity and difference. Young people enjoy passing time in the exceptionally well-equipped games and education rooms that house a range of interesting and stimulating equipment to support the development of new skills and interests. In the garden young people have developed their personal patch either with vegetables or flowers. A visiting professional commented, 'the house is fabulous very well-maintained and attention paid to detail such as you would expect in a family home.'

Professionals working with children and young people living in the home are extremely satisfied with the quality of care the children and young people are provided with. One commented, 'excellent care.'

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 he or she really understands 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. They are involved in setting their own targets and this supports the development of a sense of responsibility for their own actions. Physical intervention is only used effectively and only in extreme situations when there is no other option. 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. However, the clear arrangements, including protocols with the police, 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 recruited.

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 to providing excellent, individualised care to young people. The enthusiasm for the task permeates from the strategic level to the ground level. 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 young people's diverse and often competing needs.

The home is effectively monitored externally and by the manager and this ensures that success is celebrated and areas for development are identified. Young people's views are gathered on a monthly basis which are then fed into the business planning. To further improve the monitoring aspects of the service the manager is considering

a more integrated approach in 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 visiting 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 way in which the staff teams work, provides young people a high level of continuity. These arrangements are well managed and ensure that staff are adequately rested for their caring task. For example, following an especially difficult night the needs of staff to debrief and relax are accommodated with no impact on the care provided to young people. There is a stable long-serving group of staff which demonstrates that they are professionally motivated in working in the home and well supported.

Staff are of an exceptionally high calibre and all are totally focused on meeting each young person's specific needs. Staff are extremely well supported in their, sometimes difficult task, via regular and good quality supervision. This is enhanced by effective and relevant training for personal development, team meetings and group supervision for the therapeutic work. 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 professionals working with the young people about the staff include, 'the homeliness of the home and the warmth of the manager and her staff has helped the young person to grow and develop in becoming 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* (March 2011) and the evaluation schedule for children's homes.