

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Helen Walker
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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 service is a local authority children's home. The home provides care and accommodation for six young people who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Overall effectiveness

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

Young people generally make good progress in the home. Young people's individual needs are well regarded and staff positively promote young people's education and access to health services. Staff value education for young people and provide exceptionally good support to help them achieve at school and college.

Young people say this is a good home to live in and they mostly have positive relationships with staff. Professionals consider young people are well looked after and are kept safe. Young people feel they are listened to and their views are taken account of. Staff are sensitive to young people's diverse needs and provide strong emotional support to young people. The staff team present as caring, suitably qualified and competent in their work.

The majority of young people are settled and enjoy living in this home. However, some young people put themselves in danger as they are regularly missing from home. Strong links exist between the home and multi-agency professionals to assist staff reduce the number of missing from home episodes.

Four shortfalls have been highlighted as a result of this inspection, none of which have a significant impact on the outcomes for young people. Young people have support to develop skills for independence. However, there is no clear assessment to show what skills young people need to learn for a successful transition to adulthood.

Other areas for improvement relate to the effectiveness of anti-bullying strategies and sanctions, plus outcomes of reviews of young people's care plans.

Areas for improvementStatutory 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
28 (2001)	ensure young people's case records include the date and result of any review of the placing authority's plan for the care of the child, or of his placement plan. (Regulation 28 (1), Schedule 3)	16/09/2011

Recommendations

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

- ensure staff and young people understand bullying is unacceptable and that staff working in the home understand their role in helping to prevent and counter bullying by any adult or young person living or working in the home (NMS 3.11)
- ensure sanctions for poor behaviour are not punitive but are restorative in nature, so that children are helped to recognise the impact of their behaviour on others (NMS 3.8 and Volume 5, statutory guidance paragraph 2.89)
- provide evidence that children are supported to develop the skills for adulthood and independent living. (NMS 12.1 and Volume 5, statutory guidance paragraphs 2.130 to 2.134)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people's good health is very well promoted. Young people's physical, emotional and psychological health needs are met through the home's strong links with a range of specialist health professionals. Young people talk about their planned and routine health appointments, such as contact with the dentist and nurse. Young people have good information and access to professionals to support anti-smoking, drug and alcohol awareness. This level of contact helps young people to achieve sound health care routines for life.

Young people have good advice and guidance to lead a healthy lifestyle. The home has the benefit of a cook who provides regular, nutritious and substantial meals for young people. Additionally, the domestic staff maintain a clean and tidy home environment. Young people have the opportunity to be involved in the preparation and cooking of food at times when the cook is off duty and particularly at weekends. Young people's independence skills are further developed by staff who encourage them to tidy their bedroom and undertake other household tasks. Young people said they feel confident with their level of independence skills.

Staff actively involve and encourage young people to enjoy and pursue outdoor and physical activities to benefit their well-being. This includes walking, athletics and kickboxing. Young people are very proud of their athletic achievements which are fully recognised by the staff and other young people.

Young people are looked after by staff who support them to engage positively with education and have aspirations for their future. Some young people have made extremely good progress with education and the majority of young people attend school or college placements.

Young people use email, social network sites and their personal mobile telephone to maintain contact with family and friends in line with their placement plan. Young people have very good support from staff to maintain regular contact visits to their family and friends.

Quality of care

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

Young people have mostly positive relationships with staff. This enables young people to make good progress in their life, in particular to understand their background and reasons for living in the home. Young people said, 'everything is good.' Key workers take on a significant role to provide individual support to young people. Young people said, 'I get on with my key worker and I have lots of support from staff.' Staff have a very good understanding of the individual and diverse needs of the young people. Staff provide exceptional emotional support to young people especially at difficult times in their life. For example, this includes during hospital admission and subsequent overnight stays.

Young people say staff encourage them to give their opinions about their care and actively promote their hobbies and interests. Young people said, 'I have managed to start afresh and accomplished a few things, especially at school.'

Staff are knowledgeable about young people's backgrounds and follow care plans which support them to improve outcomes for the young people. However, the outcome decisions from young people's review meetings are not always available to staff. Therefore, staff are not informed of changes to young people's care needs and of how these are to be met within the home so that their welfare is fully promoted. Some professionals comment on a lack of communication from staff regarding incidents involving young people but overall communication is described as good.

Young people benefit from staff who are enthusiastic to motivate young people and successfully support them to learn. Staff maintain strong links with teachers to promote consistency and continuity of education for young people. Although some young people refuse to engage in education the staff are dynamic to involve education professionals and consider alternate learning strategies. Young people talk with enthusiasm about starting college courses and attending school.

Young people's behaviour is generally appropriate. Positive behaviour is encouraged and staff have contact and discussion with health professionals to assist them to manage young people's behaviour appropriately. Young people say staff are fair and there are reward systems for positive behaviours. This includes days out to activity

parks. Achievements are also celebrated and recognised by staff through praise, certificates and activity sessions.

Staff ensure young people have very good access to engage in services to promote and meet their health needs. Young people participate in leisure activities both on and off site which allow them to be involved with the wider community and mix with their peers. Young people participate in community activities, such as charity fundraising and trips to places of interest. Young people comment that staff give them opportunities to pursue activities of their choice. For example, young people said they were able to see shows for television talent competitions 'which staff kindly took me to.'

Young people receive good support from staff to gain skills for independence and leaving care. Staff work well with the young people on budgeting and everyday skills. However, pathway and independence plans are not always used in a way that ensures young people gain skills for living independently. For example, young people are not routinely taught how to pay utility bills.

Young people said they know how to make a complaint, but have not had to do so. Details about the complaints procedure, children's rights and independent organisations are readily available and accessible to young people in the home.

Young people live in homely and spacious accommodation which is suitably and comfortably furnished. The house is situated in its own grounds within a residential area. There is good access to local facilities and public transport links.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people say they generally feel safe in and outside of the home and that staff talk to them about keeping safe in different situations. However, young people talk of incidents of bullying in the home. Young people know bullying is unacceptable but say there are occasions when this happens. Staff promote anti-bullying and work with the young people to promote an anti-bullying environment. However, the strategies to promote young people's well-being are not fully effective to ensure bullying is not an issue within the home.

Young people are looked after by staff who understand safeguarding procedures and receive child protection training to help ensure young people are kept safe. Professionals involved with young people said they consider staff keep young people safe.

The staff team are trained in the appropriate use of physical restraint and state this is used as a last resort in order to help keep young people keep safe. Young people confirm physical restraint is rarely used and that they understand the reasons for intervention. Young people receive sanctions for inappropriate behaviour. However,

the majority of sanctions do not effect change in behaviour to promote a positive outcome for young people.

Young people benefit from the home's multi-agency approach to missing from home episodes. However, there is a significant number of missing from home incidents when individual young people are missing for several days each period. Staff are proactive to advise young people of the dangers and risks of leaving the home without permission. Multi-agency risk management meetings are held to support staff to try and reduce the number of young people missing from home. Young people who are settled in the home said they find missing from home episodes unsettling and comment on the frequency of these events.

Good health and safety procedures help to ensure young people live in a safe physical environment. Young people are aware of the fire evacuation procedures and describe the action to take in the event of a fire. A regular team of staff work at the home with no new staff employed since the last inspection. The manager confirms the provider follows a robust selection and vetting process to establish staff suitability to work with young people.

Leadership and management

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

The manager provides very good leadership and is effective overall in her management of the home. The home benefits from an experienced and qualified assistant manager who deputises for the manager as necessary. The provider demonstrates a commitment to staff through the provision of training to develop their skills and competency to work with young people.

Staff understand the diverse needs of the young people and actively promote young people's welfare through positive care practice. The home is suitably resourced and employs a sufficient number of staff for the needs of the young people. The staff team present as competent and caring in their work and provide young people with an exceptional level of support. Staff have good support and supervision from the management team which assists them in their work and professional development.

A Statement of Purpose outlines the aims and objectives of the home which are met and made known to those with an interest in the home. The manager regularly monitors the operation of the home to ensure that good standards are maintained.

No requirements or recommendations were made at the last inspection.

Staff are nominated to have specific roles within the home, such as the champion for education, equality and diversity or sexual health. This works well and helps to ensure young people are well informed and have a good understand about these matters. Young people have excellent opportunities to undertake life story work with the support of staff who are keen to ensure young people are well informed and understand their history and background. Very positive working relationships with other agencies demonstrate staff work in partnership in the best interest of the young people.

Young people said, 'the good things about living in the home are the food and most of the staff.' Staff show a real commitment to young people's care and strive to engage with all the young people. Young people were seen to be comfortable with staff and readily discussed the events of the day with them. Professionals said that staff are supportive to the young people and they feel this is a 'very happy home.'

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.