

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Andrew Hewston
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This local authority owned children's home can accommodate up to four young people.

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 make good progress in their welfare and development. They are achieving good outcomes in their education, independence skills and the development of confidence and self-esteem. They are beginning to take responsibility for their own health and risk taking behaviour is reducing.

Young people receive good quality care that is well planned and based on the individual needs of the young person. They are involved in their care and the running of the home. Staff are motivated and committed to providing a high standard of care.

Young people have good relationships with staff and each other. Behaviour is well managed and continues to improve. Restraint is rarely used. Young people feel safe and are kept safe. Incidents of young people going missing are reducing. Any allegations against staff are handled appropriately.

The management of the home is strong and the home continues to provide a positive and safe place for young people to live. There are no breaches of regulation but two recommendations are made as a result of this inspection. However, these shortfalls do not significantly impact negatively on the welfare or safety of young people.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure children receive prompt feedback on any concerns or complaints raised and are kept informed of progress (NMS 1.6)
- ensure sanctions and rewards for behaviour are clear, reasonable and fair and are understood by all staff and children (NMS 3.8).

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people develop significantly while at the home. The caring and professional nature of the staff team results in improvements in young people's behaviours and awareness of their family circumstances. Young people are positive about being at the home and state that they enjoy being there and are well supported. A social worker stated that the home keeps them well informed, providing good quality information and the staff are always available to discuss the development of the young people placed. Another social worker stated that the young person had 'made dramatic improvements' while being at the home and was 'a lot more settled than in any other placement'.

Although not all young people attend school they are all involved in education and develop well, due to the positive influence of the staff team and their commitment to young people improving while being at the home. This is a significant improvement on young people's educational involvement prior to being at the home.

Transition arrangements into the home and to other placements are of a high standard. Young people are able to discuss how they were able to visit the home on a number of occasions prior to moving in, while others spoke about planning to move out and how the staff were being supportive.

Young people benefit from good contact arrangements with their parents, family and friends. The staff communicate well with families and encourage them to visit the home and be involved with their lives at the home. Young people are encouraged to make and sustain appropriate friendships with their peers. Young people participate in an independence programme to learn practical skills such as shopping and cooking, budgeting and washing to help them prepare for adulthood.

Young people are fully supported with developing in their health and promote attendance at all health appointments. Young people state that they 'feel healthier because the staff make sure that you are looked after.'

Young people are involved with differing activities within the community and have also been involved with differing charities. A recent sponsored walk for McMillan nurses was successful in raising funds for the organisation.

Quality of care

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

Young people state that they enjoy being at the home and that the staff are always around for you to talk to them if you need to. Relationships observed throughout the inspection show that staff and young people interact very well and that staff are positive role models for the young people. Young people are listened to through

regular home meetings and all receive key work meetings to respond to individual issues within the home. Young people are aware of how to make a complaint within the home and an independent visitor also supports young people when complaints are made. Records of complaints do not always fully show how they have been fully responded to and this could decrease young people's acceptance of the complaints system.

Placement planning is individualised to meet the needs of the young people. Planning relates to the Looked After Children documentation and shows planning for young people on a day to day basis. Key workers update placement planning to include necessary aspects that have changed as a response to reviews or incidents that have occurred within the home. Planning includes information relating to aspects of young people health. Young people benefit from support from a range of health professionals and the staff support them to attend appointments. Staff work with other agencies and organisations to address issues of substance abuse. At least one young person states that they have been involved with drugs, while they have been at the home, although staff have tried to help them to stop this activity. This has led to a decrease in their drug use while they have been at the home. The staff are trained in first aid and the safe administration of medication. Written records of the administration of medication are clear and accurate.

Young people benefit from a range of educational opportunities and programmes to support their individual learning needs. Staff and education providers maintain good communication to enable young people to sustain their placement. Where there are delays in sourcing education, staff support education in the home with a timetable and suitably qualified staff to support home education. As a result, young people are supported to achieve their educational potential.

Young people enjoy a range of activities that are offered by the home's staff and are able to discuss how they have been supported with activities such as horse riding. Young people are also able to spend time on their own outside of the home although young people's whereabouts are not always fully known. Appropriate discussions are held with young people on their return to the home to ensure that they are safe and not involved with inappropriate activities.

The home is well looked after and offers a very pleasant homely environment to the young people. Communal and bedroom areas are well personalised to give young people a sense of belonging to the home. Damage to the home is swiftly responded to and it is positive to see staff painting and decorating to support its' appearance.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people state that they generally feel safe within the home. Incidents of bullying are responded to swiftly by the staff team and young people are supported when such incidents occur. Young people state that they are able to discuss issues with the staff team and especially their key workers if they feel worried about their safety.

Appropriate policies and procedures are in place relating to safeguarding and staff have completed appropriate training in this area to support young people.

Although there have been instances of young people absenting themselves without

permission such incidents are responded to appropriately. Young people are subsequently supported and helped in ensuring that they are safe. Risk assessments and missing person's protocols are in place through discussions with the local police to further support young people's safety.

Positive behaviour is promoted by the staff team, with negative behaviours and poor language appropriately challenged. Young people are fully aware of the homes' behaviour incentive systems which recognise good behaviour and achievements. Consequences for poor behaviour are often negotiated with young people and the home has worked well with police to develop community resolutions. This means young people learn the consequences of their actions and how to manage their own behaviour. Minor clarifications are necessary within the records to highlight when sanctions have been completed but this does not affect the welfare of young people. The staff are trained in the use of physical intervention and use a variety of techniques to de-escalate incidents. The use of restraint is rare and, where it is used, it is appropriate and well recorded. As a result young people behave positively. The home has a variety of risk assessments for the building and equipment. Health and safety checks are completed as required to ensure the building is safe. Young people and staff practice evacuation from the building. Young people are protected from unsuitable people gaining employment by a good recruitment process. Visitors to the home are asked to sign in and identification is checked. This further ensures young people are protected from significant harm.

Leadership and management

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

The home has an effective management team and staff show a high awareness of the differing needs of the young people and how these are being responded to within the home. The leadership team show a high awareness of on-going issues within the home and is responsive to both the needs of the young people and the staff team. The staff team are committed to, and passionate about, ensuring young people achieve their potential. Staff are positive about their roles and knowledgeable about the young people. They have a good awareness of the progress individuals make and the value that living in the home adds to their lives. Staff are supportive of each other. The positive way they talk about their relationships with each other and with young people supports the sense of community.

The Statement of Purpose provides an accurate reflection of the care and facilities provided by the residential provision. The document gives parents, staff and professionals a clear account of the aims, approaches and ethos of the home. It also sets out the expectations of the home and what young people can expect in terms of their care and proposed outcomes. The homes' development plan further shows how the home continues to move forwards. There were no requirements or recommendations for delivering improved practice at the last inspection although there have been developments in the condition of the home, with a new en suite facility for staff, which increases the level of privacy for young people.

Staff have regular supervision and say they can access support at any time. They receive good levels of training to support them to meet the needs of the young people. There are good communication systems in place; staff meeting minutes show

that there is a focus on young people and on addressing identified issues. Recordings relating to young people are of a good quality and updated on a regular basis, either through the computer based system or within individual files . All recordings are securely kept, although are gone through with young people when appropriate.

Monitoring of the home is completed on a monthly basis through the manager's assessment and also through the external visits by the operations manager. Reports are sufficiently detailed and give a good awareness of the work being completed within the home. Managers notify the relevant authorities of significant events in a timely manner and with a good level of detail.

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.