

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Pete Hylton
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Date of last inspection	01/02/2011
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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 is a local authority managed home set in a residential neighbourhood the home offers placements for up to four young people of either sex from 14 to 17 years of age. The length of stay is based on an assessment of need.

Overall effectiveness

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

This is an outstanding children's home and young people make excellent progress. A strong and committed manager ensures that young people are exceptionally well cared for by a positive, stable and enthusiastic staff team. Management of the home is to a high standard and there are clear plans in place to sustain improvement.

The use of physical intervention is exceptionally low although there have been occasions where this has not been accurately recorded or reviewed. Young people feel safe in the home and risk management is good. The home has clear plans for improvement and the staff are committed to providing the best quality care to young people. There are excellent links with the local community and young people enjoy a wide range of activities.

Relationships between staff and young people are excellent. Young people's views are listened to and influence how the home is run, however, the service does not always record the views of young people after sanctions are given. Concerns are acted upon swiftly and young people are fully supported in all aspects of their care. Educational attendance and achievement is exceptional and young people are actively encouraged to achieve their potential. Young people maintain good contact with family where appropriate although they are not always able to make telephone calls in private.

The home is appropriately decorated and maintained and young people feel comfortable and relaxed in the home. One young person commented that, 'it's like a regular home, just like your own home'.

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
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15 (2001)	ensure that children accommodated in the home are provided at all reasonable times, and without reference to persons working in the home, a telephone on which to make and receive calls in private (Regulation 15.4.a)	28/10/2011
17A (2001)	ensure that a measure of restraint is only used on a child accommodated in a children's home for the purpose of preventing injury to any person and preventing serious damage to the property of any person. This relates to recording systems used by the home (Regulation 17a.1a.1b)	28/10/2011
17B (2001)	ensure that within 24 hours of the use of any measure of control, discipline or restraint in a children's home, a written record is made in a volume kept for the purpose (Regulation 17B.3)	28/10/2011
30 (2001)	ensure that if any of the events listed in column 1 of the table in Schedule 5 takes place, the registered person shall without delay notify the persons indicated in respect of the event in column 2 of the table. (Regulation 30.1).	28/10/2011

Recommendations

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

- ensure that when any sanctions, disciplinary measures or restraint are used, children are encouraged to have their views recorded in records kept by the home (NMS 3.18)
- ensure that regular reviews of challenging behaviour examines trends or issues emerging from this, to enable staff to reflect and learn to inform future practice (NMS 3.21)
- ensure that there is a written development plan, reviewed annually, for the future of the home, either identifying any planned changes in the operation or resources of the service, or confirming the continuation of the home's current operation and resource (NMS 15.2)
- ensure that information about individual children is kept confidential and only shared with those who have a legitimate need to know the information (NMS 22.3).

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people make exceptional progress at the home. All young people attend appropriate educational provision and are fully supported by staff in making progress. Attendance is excellent and in some cases, young people have achieved

exceptional improvements in their attendance. There are strong links between education and the home. This means that progress is appropriately shared and concerns swiftly acted upon for the benefit of the young person.

Young people are positively involved in community activity. For example, a recent sponsored bike ride raised over £150 for charity and young people have taken part in a local church event. Young people are actively involved in planning their own activities and the staff work hard to provide opportunities. They have converted an area of the garden into a vegetable patch and ate the produce as part of their healthy eating. This and other examples, show how young people develop a good understanding of healthy lifestyles. Young people are actively encouraged to use the gym equipment and regular outdoor activities are organised to promote healthy lifestyles.

Young people have helped to devise the use of tokens for good behaviour and have agreed the rewards with staff. Young people make excellent progress in managing their behaviour. A social worker commented that a young person had made, 'massive progress. Better relationships with staff, feels safer and settled here'.

Quality of care

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

Young people enjoy excellent relationships within the home. They are cared for by a strong staff team who work hard to promote their independence and meet their individual needs. A young person said that staff, 'help us to get ready [for independence] they treat us like young adults'. Young people benefit from positive relationships with each other and their friends are encouraged to visit the home.

Young people benefit from regular house meetings and they have an excellent input into the running of the home. They feel listened to and staff work hard to ensure that their views are acted on. A young person commented, 'everything', when asked what was good about the home.

High quality care planning ensures young people are well cared for. All young people are actively encouraged in the review and implementation of their care plans. All care plans are individualised to the young person and involve the views of appropriate others. Young people are consulted at all times and changes are signed by them and the home. All files are up to date and reflect the current situation for each young person.

Young people are consulted on menu choices and the cook ensures that all meals are nutritious and varied. A young person said, 'the food is amazing'. All young people access planned health appointments, medication is administered appropriately and health plans are fully updated. Healthy lifestyles are actively promoted by staff and activities support this. Young people are encouraged to engage in outdoor activities and they benefit from access to gym equipment in the home. Furthermore, young people go to the local gym and benefit from a personal trainer.

Staff work hard to promote education and young people enjoy excellent attendance and attainment. All young people are engaged in education. A social worker commented, 'the expectation is that they go to school'. The manager ensures that any barriers to attendance are resolved. Young people benefit from a supportive staff team who attend parent evenings, open days and support them in getting equipment ready for school. The provision of a quiet area with computer access is used by young people to complete homework. Staff encourage young people to achieve.

There has been excellent progress in meeting individual needs and staff are creative in their approach. For example, there is good liaison with external agencies to plan and deliver specific aspects of care. There is a positive culture of openness and respect that celebrates the uniqueness of each young person. Contact is well managed by the staff and young people are encouraged to sustain family contact where appropriate. Whilst the use of the telephone is available, young people do not always have the facility to make calls in private or without asking staff. Young people do not however, state this is a problem.

Staff ensure that the views, wishes and feelings of young people are listened to. Regular key working sessions mean that all young people have their opinions thoroughly recorded. There is a robust complaints procedure and the manager is proactive in managing complaints. Complaints are rare in the home but where they occur, young people are fully supported. All young people can identify how to discuss their concerns and are supported with the outcomes.

The home is a good size for the children who live there, with a well equipped and well used garden and an outhouse full of gym equipment. Young people feel that they are listened to and a young person commented that, 'it's really cool here. You could never ask for anything better'.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people say that they feel safe and cared for. Positive relationships between staff and young people ensure that the young people feel safe. A young person commented that, 'the staff take care of us they just want us to be safe'. Young people rarely go missing from the home and staff ensure they know the whereabouts of young people. Concerns are acted upon swiftly and appropriately. One member of staff said, 'we keep in contact with them and make sure they know we're looking after them'. Good informal relationships with the local police help break down barrier and keep young people safe. A police officer commented that they have, 'good links with the home'. This enables young people to have positive relationships with the police and this further supports the safe environment created by the home.

There is an innovative approach to behaviour management. Young people are actively involved in drawing up the strategies and are positively engaged with it. Sanctions are proportionate and appropriate although young people do not always

have their views recorded. There is no monitoring of frequency of sanctions nor to whom they relate, although all are recorded. The system for recording physical intervention does not meet the regulations. There has been an occasion where restraint was used and not appropriately recorded.

Young people are supported in taking planned and well-managed risk that helps them to practice their skills for adulthood. For example, they can have planned overnight stays in a training flat as part of developing independence.

Young people benefit from an environment where bullying is not tolerated. One young person said that they 'feel safe, if anybody bullies you then I can talk to staff'. Incidents are clearly recorded and young people are supported in discussing concerns through regular key working sessions. Staff are committed to keeping young people safe and the manager has created an atmosphere where young people and staff can talk to her if they are worried. The manager commented that they, 'make sure everyone can speak out'.

Leadership and management

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

Young people benefit from a home which is regularly monitored by both the manager and the organisation. The manager has a good overview of events occurring in the home and progress that young people make. One serious incident was not notified to the appropriate bodies although the Police were called to the home. This did not lead to an adverse affect on the outcomes for young people.

The manager has a development plan in place which has clear analysis of the home's strengths and weaknesses. However, the plan does not clearly identify how these identified weaknesses are going to be addressed. Improvements in the home are evident but are not always thoroughly documented.

The home has a very relaxed and open atmosphere and this means that young people are often present in the office. Whilst no confidential information is left open, it is not always clear if young people overhear discussions of a sensitive nature. This means that information relating to individual young people could be overheard by other young people.

Young people benefit from a highly stable, qualified and supported staff team. Young people are routinely involved in the running of the home and the manager has introduced positive behaviour strategies as a result of his consultation. Staff are outstanding at removing barriers that get in the way of young people's participation in the community. They really advocate for the young people and respect individual needs.

Equality and diversity practice is **outstanding**.

