

## Inspection report for children's home

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| <b>Unique reference number</b> | SC040631        |
| <b>Inspection date</b>         | 05/05/2011      |
| <b>Inspector</b>               | Angus Mackay    |
| <b>Type of inspection</b>      | Full            |
| <b>Provision subtype</b>       | Children's home |

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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

A local authority manages the home, which is one of a number of homes administered by them. The home has a new Statement of Purpose which states that accommodation is provided for up to eight young people from diverse backgrounds between the ages of 11 and 15 years upon admission. The home works closely with schools, social workers and families to provide a service to children with a wide range of presenting problems. Most admissions are planned although emergency admissions are considered.

### Overall effectiveness

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

Children are achieving their educational potential and have excellent attendance at school. While in the home workers ensure that they support, celebrate and reinforce this good attendance and achievement of children. The home ensures that children are engaged in a wide range of stimulating activities, which help them in their social reintegration. The home has excellent relationships with the families and friends of the children and encourages their positive engagement within the home.

Children say that they feel involved in the planning of the home and believe that staff listen to them and help them with their problems. They say that they love being in the home and love the staff there. Staff maintain appropriate boundaries in the home and social occasions such as meal times are pleasant and well managed. Children say that staff keep them safe and protect them from bullying. They enjoy the activities and say they have choice about what they do in leisure time. The Registered Manager took prompt and effective action to resolve a period when children felt unsafe in the home.

Monitoring of the home is of a good standard aiding in the improvement of practice. Managers provide good training and supervision to the team to aid them in effectively meeting the diverse care needs of the children. Social workers describe the home as providing an excellent service to the children. There is one recommendation from this inspection relating to staff development.

### Areas for improvement

## **Recommendations**

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

- ensure all existing staff have attained a minimum level 3 qualification. (NMS 18.5)

## **Outcomes for children and young people**

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

Care staff provide excellent support to children to aid them in their exceptional attendance at school. They provide assistance to several of the children in getting ready for school and in organising appropriate clothing and equipment. Teachers describe the home as being excellent at keeping in touch and working professionally in partnership with them. Teachers say that the home ensures young people do their homework and encourage them to read or do some other learning activity if there is no homework. Children and teachers say that care staff attend all meetings at school and aid the children in participating in their meetings. The home maintains contact with schools as required for each young person. The children are all making good to excellent progress at school and are proud of their achievements there. Children brought out certificates of achievement and talked about how care staff were pleased with their progress. The home puts a strong emphasis on good attendance and performance at school, which aids children in maintaining this excellent standard. One teacher explained how the home arranged meetings to occur outside school time to avoid disruption to attendance and performance. The children are all very positive about their schools and are positive about the support they receive from care staff with attendance and homework.

The home encourage children to take part in a wide range of leisure pursuits including guides, adventure scouts, horse riding,, dancing, cadets and after school clubs. Children benefit from this engagement in positive community based activities. The children get to choose what activities they do and care-staff help them to do them. Many of the clubs are some distance from the home and care-staff ensure that children are not at risk attending them.

Children are encouraged to maintain contact with their families and the home aids them in this. A social worker said, 'the home has been great with contact with the family and have helped to build up home contact', to the benefit of the child. Another social worker described how the particular keyworker had a 'fantastic relationship' with the child's mother and that the mother will respond to requests from the home to aid with her child. Children are encouraged to maintain life storybooks to help them understand their background and experiences. Children receive assistance in learning about their background and in making contact with family members. There were several examples of excellent joint working with social workers and families to reform contacts and make contact with estranged parts of children's families. Children commented about how much their key-workers tried for them to organise family contacts, even if they were not always successful.

Children help prepare meals and are encouraged to eat healthily. Children have choice in what they eat but care staff encourage them to include fruit and vegetables in their diet. The home meets cultural and religious dietary requirements for children as well as issues of preference. The staff team are aware of the complex presenting problems of the children in the home. Care staff work closely with external professionals to ensure they provide appropriate assistance to children in addressing their health needs to enable them to thrive physically. Children are fully engaged in choosing how they address these presenting problems, with support and guidance from key-workers to aid them. For example all children have been offered therapy but two have chosen not to participate in this.

## Quality of care

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

Children live in a well looked after home, which has a high standard of decoration. Children say that the Registered Manager consults them about the décor of the home and gives them full choice about their bedroom. The Registered Manager ensures that he gets repairs done speedily, to maintain the pleasant living space for children. Where possible children do several visits to the home prior to admission and on one visit, see the room they will be staying in to help the settling in process for them. Key-workers help children to personalise their bedrooms and take them shopping for items to put in their rooms. Children say that they love their bedrooms and appreciate the help they get from their key-workers personalising their space.

The children were pleasant and polite to adults in the home and responded well to verbal prompts when this slipped with other children. The children were confident to talk to me once care staff explained this was safe to do, displaying good awareness of safety. The children and care staff showed great warmth and affection for each other and the atmosphere in the home was pleasant and friendly. All children said that they felt safe in the home and that the staff looked after them well. The children said that they had not felt safe previously because of the challenging behaviour of other children. However, this matter has been sorted out and they no longer feel unsafe.

Children have individual placement plans, which support the care plans in existence for them. Staff encourage and engage children positively in developing self-confidence and decision making. The children discuss their care and placement plans with key-workers who incorporate their views into them. All children are aware of the content of these plans and say that care staff listen to them and reflect their views in the plans. Staff afford children choice suitable with their age, ability and with due regard to risk. Staff work closely with children their social workers and where possible their families to extend children and give them opportunities to take risks safely. An example was a lengthy discussion between a key-worker and a parent to enable the child to return to the home using public transport in a controlled way. Children appreciate the work done by their key-workers and express their affection for them.

The home provides children with access to a comprehensive health service covering emotional, mental and physical health, which takes account of personal differences. Key-workers access eye, dental and medical checks for all children to ensure that they provide them with appropriate care. Keyworkers ensure that they support this by issuing medication and teaching children how to brush teeth and other issues of personal hygiene to aid children's continuous improvement. Children say that the home helps them to prepare for school and provides reminders about personal hygiene, daily. The home ensures that they safely issue all medicines to children, which are suitably and safely stored. The local children and adolescent mental health service provides therapy sessions for children in the home. Key-workers accompany children to these sessions and in some cases take part in them to assist children participating successfully. One psychiatrist commented that the home had a stable influence on the child, which was very beneficial for him. The home is fully engaged in discussion with psychiatrists, psychologists and therapists influencing decisions to the benefit of children. The home provides what one social worker described as 'a

nurturing, therapeutic environment' for the child she had placed there. This social worker stated that the home is doing an incredible job with this child and that it is, 'a highly appropriate placement for him'.

Children know how to make complaints if they are unhappy. They confirmed that staff deal with their complaints and sort problems out. Key-workers offer all children access to independent visitors who visit once a month, to ensure they are safe and have access to someone external to the home. Children are confident in the support they receive from their key-worker and how they fight for them to get the best outcomes for them. One child said that her key-worker had listened to her request for contact with her family and had been working on that. She said that staff explained to her that she could not get everything at once and had to have contact build up gradually. Social workers and teachers stated that the home had excellent relationships with them and kept them informed of all progress with the children. The home has excellent relationships with children's families and work closely with social workers to improve the contacts for the children. Families are encouraged to visit the home and to join in meal times to improve relationships with their child. The home celebrates children's achievements and has many pictures around the home of activities holidays and other events involving the children which aids their sense of belonging and being valued. Children told the inspector about their attendance at the children's Oscars and the awards they achieved which had boosted their self-confidence. They were very proud of their achievements but also of one of their key-workers whom also received an award.

The home provides a positive environment for children to succeed in school, with personal development and socially. Key-workers encourage a strong focus on achievement for children and make strenuous efforts to ensure that there is no conflict in the differing interventions to the detriment of children. For example, the home rescheduled therapy sessions to avoid disruption in school. All children are encouraged and supported in attending a wide range of leisure activities which help with their personal development. Key-workers liaise with external groups to ensure continued success in these activities for the children. The home focuses on activities, providing positive learning, development of new skills and enhanced social interactions to help the development of the children.

The home works closely with children and their families to assist in life story work and maintaining contacts in disrupted families. Key-workers help children with issues of identity and aid children in coming to an understanding of their background and that of others. Key-workers ensure that they address all issues to do with children's cultural background or personal identity in a manner each child agrees with.

### **Safeguarding children and young people**

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

Children say that they feel safe within the home and enjoy exceptional relationships with all adults caring for them there. The Registered Manager in consultation with his line managers successfully addressed a recent situation, which made the children feel unsafe. Whilst the current very vulnerable children are in residence, there will be a strict control on admissions to provide an appropriate environment for them. All children said that they knew what to do if they felt unsafe and to whom they could talk if worried. Independent visitors are available to meet the children, visiting monthly, and Regulation 33 visitors talk to them to enhance their safety.

Staff are very knowledgeable about the children in the home and the risk assessments relating to them which aids in their care. They all were aware of the diverse needs and individual preferences of each child and agreed actions to take for their safety and improvement. Key-workers regularly review risk assessments on children and ensure that they contain what to do if they go missing. The home has a positive relationship with the local police and community support officers, which enhances the safety of the children. Police visit young people following any occasion where they go missing to ensure they are safe from harm within the home. There have been only eight instances of young people going missing since the last inspection involving three children. The home recorded these accurately and took appropriate actions to safeguard children. Key-workers afford children opportunities to explore their local area safely and to gain experience of unsupervised time suitable with their age and risk profile.

The home provides regular training in dealing with difficult behaviour including physical interventions. There have been four incidents of restraint since the last inspection all relating to the child who has subsequently moved. The home generally manages behaviour by non-physical interventions including a wide range of diversionary tactics and a strong emphasis on prevention of situations escalating. Any restraints are comprehensively and clearly recorded and the Registered Manager and the Regulation 33 visitor check records to ensure the ongoing safety of the children. The care team with the Registered Manager review incidents of restraint seeking to minimise their occurrence. The staff are aware of what holds are permissible and do not use any prohibited by current guidance to ensure children are safely managed.

Sanctions used with children are rare and are appropriate to the presenting behaviour. One sanction related to damage caused in an external school, the head of year commenting that, 'like any other child he has to contribute to the repair which they take from his pocket money'. The school confirmed that the home are very good at encouraging positive behaviour.

Children say that staff intervene if there is any bullying and that there is no little bullying currently. One child said that he suffers bullying and that staff always intervene to protect him. For example, staff are teaching him techniques to avoid bullying and he trusts them to safeguard him. During the evening meal, the team successfully and sensitively addressed an issue of bullying and a child apologised to him.

Staff know what to do to safeguard children and how to identify signs of abuse. They

are aware of what actions to take to report any allegations or suspicions of abuse and ensure children feel safe to approach them. Children confirm that they know who to speak to if they suffer any sort of abuse inside or outside the home. There have been no reported incidents of child protection referrals since the last inspection.

Children have made positive progress in addressing their presenting problems while in the home. For example, a social worker said his client had lots of serious tantrums and unsettled behaviour and is very settled now, 'the home has worked through them all'. The home works closely with children to help them achieve success, for example, telling them what to do then helping them to do it.

### **Leadership and management**

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

The Registered Manager provides a safe homely environment for the children with a wide range of leisure equipment to stimulate them. He treats health and safety with utmost seriousness. For example, fire drills are conducted monthly and all staff are trained in fire safety procedures in order to safeguard children appropriately.

The management of the home have rewritten the Statement of Purpose in January 2011 to ensure that it outlines the current service provided to children. Children and staff are clear about the aims of the home with children indicating they may have to move despite being happy there. The Statement of Purpose highlights the strong commitment to seeking the views of young people and getting their active participation in the running of the home. Children say that they are aware of the rules and expectations outlined in the Statement of Purpose and understand them.

Staff are very well supported in caring for young people. They all are very positive about the support they receive from their managers and enjoy working in the home. Managers provide staff with regular supervision. Staff describe supervision as very positive, frequent and relevant to the task. In addition to regular formal supervision staff receive a lot of guidance to help enhance their effectiveness with the children. Staff attend a wide range of appropriate courses designed to enhance their skills and attributes working with children. However, some long serving members of staff have not completed their National Vocational Qualification.

Children benefit from the experience, qualifications and commitment of the staff team. One social worker stated, 'the home has a lot of very senior practitioners and this shines through in their practice.' There are sufficient people on duty to provide for the care needs of the children and the managers increase numbers if required to meet all the needs of the children. The managers increase staffing numbers to ensure children can attend their wide spread clubs and activities. Handovers between shifts are exceptionally detailed and shift leaders use them to plan how to address outstanding issues and to organise an effective use of resources. The shift leader provides detailed information about each child giving incoming members of staff a clear feeling for what is happening with everyone, their mood and any positives or negatives. This excellent use of time assists the shift leader to provide a positive well-planned service to children.

The local authority provides independent visitors to monitor the conduct of the home and to produce Regulation 33 reports to comment on records, the environment and feedback from children. The Registered Manager acts upon comments in these reports and shares them with members of staff to aid their practice with children. The Registered Manager conducts checks as listed in Schedule 6 of the regulations ensuring the home provides an appropriate service to children. The Registered Manager monitors the effectiveness of the home in line with its function within this plan. New initiatives and policy updates come through the Registered Manager via staff meetings and either in house or countywide training. The home is subject to an ongoing review of its purpose and function which managers say children will be involved in.

The home maintains up-to-date files on all children, which are securely stored in the office. Files contain all reviewing information including up to date looked after children reviews, mental and physical health checks and relevant educational information such as personal education plans and individual education plans. Members of staff maintain clear placement plans, which align with the other recording systems and detail targets for children and themselves to achieve in an agreed time. The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The diverse care team respect the individuality of the children and work closely with them to enhance their understanding of their background and family.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.