

## Inspection report for children's home

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| <b>Unique reference number</b> | SC040633           |
| <b>Inspection date</b>         | 14/11/2013         |
| <b>Inspector</b>               | Jennie Christopher |
| <b>Type of inspection</b>      | Full               |
| <b>Provision subtype</b>       | Children's home    |

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| <b>Date of last inspection</b> | 12/02/2013 |
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## Service information

### Brief description of the service

The home, which is owned and managed by a local authority, provides care and accommodation for up to five children with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

### 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 are extremely positive about living in the home and observed relationships with staff are excellent. Young people feel staff support them to overcome barriers and challenges in their lives. Young people thrive in all aspects of their lives as a result of living in the home. Young people are listened to and staff are demonstrably concerned for their well-being. Young people are supported to establish and build upon positive relationships in a safe and nurturing environment.

The home's management effectively guide the consistent and experienced staff team. Staff say they are well trained and receive regular support through formal and informal supervision. Young people benefit from staff continuity and their consistency of approach. Young people are effectively supported to live in a group and to value others opinions and beliefs; while understanding their individually identity. Bullying is not specifically raised as a concern; although staff are continually observing behaviours to ensure incidents that do arise are managed swiftly. Young people are actively involved in consultation and service development through group meetings and individual sessions.

Staff form reciprocal relationships with parents, carers, education and a wide range of specialist services to ensure a comprehensive approach to care and placement planning. Social workers comment that staff are always willing to 'go the extra mile' to ensure young people's needs are met. They further say that communication is effective and they are updated regularly regarding progress and any concerns.

The management and senior teams are continually striving for improvement and are aware of the strengths and value of living in the home. Weaknesses are thoroughly

explored when identified to ensure a continuously evolving service. Two recommendations have been identified as a result of this inspection; ensuring that the placing authority, young people and where appropriate parents give specific consent for the use of bedroom door alarms and ensuring all staff have their performance appraised at least annually.

## Areas for improvement

### Recommendations

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

- devise a policy setting out how electronic monitoring devices, in this instance door alarms, will be used. Furthermore gain consent from the placing authority, young people and when appropriate their parents for the use of the device (NMS 10.5)
- ensure all staff have their performance appraised at least annually. (NMS 19.6)

### Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **outstanding**.

Young people make excellent progress in all aspects of their lives, in relation to their starting points. Young people thrive through individualised care, developing the skills to have improved confidence, self-esteem and resilience while understanding their vulnerabilities. Further guidance enables young people to explore their individuality and enjoy a greater understanding of who they are and their personal history. Staff's unconditional positive regard enables strong attachments enabling young people to develop the foundation to form and sustain appropriate relationships with peers and family.

Young people have a good understanding of healthy lifestyles and what this means. Effective health promotion within the home and through external professionals ensures individual knowledge and understanding is constantly evolving. Young people enjoy good health with limited use of prescribed medication and where appropriate, medication is reduced in line with plans agreed with emotional and physical health specialists.

While there is minimal risk taking behaviour in the home, proactive support and encouragement from staff ensures young people are able to better channel emotions and understand the causes of any unwanted or potentially harmful behaviour. Further support ensures young people are able to work positively towards reducing any potentially risky behaviours.

Attendance at school is exceptional. Excellent joint working between the home and school enables young people to progress and achieve in line with their peers. Those

who struggle with formal education and attending school receive creative and individually specific support packages from both staff and external agencies. This has led to all young people being appropriately placed and being extremely enthusiastic about their learning.

Young people have positive relationships in the community, accessing leisure activities such as football clubs, guides and scouts. Young people have started to form positive friendships as a result of attending groups. Young people are further involved in charity work and fund raising; a recent example includes cycling to the local park in 'onsies' to raise funds for a national charity. Achievements are celebrated through certificates and displays within the home.

While living in the home young people learn a wide range of life and practical skills, such as living with other people and belonging to a group alongside household cleaning tasks and cooking meals. In conjunction with this, they learn essential self-care and life skills in preparation for moving on to their next identified placement.

## Quality of care

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

Young people flourish as a result of their consistent and constructive relationships with staff. Young people feel staff are concerned about all aspects of their welfare and talk positively about staff. Observed interactions are nurturing, supportive and operating within appropriate boundaries. Young people are animated and encouraged to express themselves as an individual.

Young people's views are central to planning and service innovation. Regular house meetings, key work sessions and informal discussion ensure all young people's views are sought and when possible acted upon. Young people are continuously involved in their care plans, including creating their own version of how they would like to be addressed and how they would like to be supported and cared for during their placement. Furthermore culture and identity is reflected from the young person's viewpoint of how it feels to be them and what is important to them. When individual views and ideas cannot be acted upon, young people receive the support they require to manage their feelings associated with their disappointment.

Staff have extremely high aspirations for all young people in their care and work cohesively as a team to ensure consistency and utilisation of their on-going training in therapeutic techniques. The changing needs of young people are continually monitored and plans are updated by staff in consultation with young people and where appropriate, with parents, social workers and other relevant professionals.

Staff support educational placements with highly robust communication between home, school and with specialist education professionals. Those on reduced timetables enjoy constructive activities during the school day, such as life skills and creative activities.

Young people attend all required medical appointments and there are close links with specialist health professionals when needed. Mental and emotional health specialists, such as Community Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) and educational psychologists work closely with staff to ensure consistency of approach in supporting young people's emotional well-being and responses to unwanted behaviours. Staff are involved in on-going training specifically around attachment disorder to help them further respond to and support young people. Medication is stored appropriately and there is a thorough system to ensure safety when administering. In case of emergency, there are several first aiders on site at all times.

Young people have access to independent advocates when required and know how to make complaints and who to complain to. However there have been no complaints since the last inspection. Information on how to access a range of advocacy and support services is clearly displayed. Young people say bullying is currently not a particular issue, and when it has been, restorative approaches have been used try and resolve any concerns. Staff are considerate to young people's needs and recognise incidents of potential bullying and respond to situation swiftly to prevent them escalating.

The well-maintained building has homely living and safety in mind, with many areas for independent or group interaction. Young people are invited to feel part of the home through inclusion in the house crest in the form of individually decorated sections of the shield.

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

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

Observations demonstrate that young people feel safe and that staff do all they can to keep them safe. Young people's welfare is actively promoted and staff do all they can to protect young people from abuse or harm. Staff are confident in processes to follow should they be concerned for a young person's safety or welfare and are aware of child protection procedures. Any concerns are appropriately reported and followed up and policies within the home are updated in response to lessons learned locally and nationally; including identifying signs of exploitation. Staff are aware of individual vulnerabilities and work closely to ensure continued safety of all young people, including appropriate checks in order for young people to visit friends' houses.

Young people do not go missing from care. However there are robust measures in place and close links with specialist police should this happen. Triggers are identified for what might cause young people to want to 'hide' within the grounds and these are explored with young people. Comprehensive plans from regular meetings identify support and protective factors for those at risk of harm, displaying harmful behaviours or offending. A specialist behavioural therapist commented that staff 'look to support young people any way they can' and work closely with their team of professionals. Individual files contain up-to-date photographs of young people in

case of emergency.

The organisation's recruitment policy is thorough and ensures young people are protected from harm by robust personnel checks.

Individualised positive behaviour plans reward young people through positive reinforcement and small incentives such as small gifts. Sanctions are rarely used and those in place are proportionate. Young people are increasingly encouraged to reflect on their behaviour and how they can make situations 'right'. For example a young person made a cake for the other young people to apologise for disruption they had caused. Further support and encouragement aids young people to consider how future responses could be different. Staffs proactive responses to unwanted behaviour coupled their increasingly therapeutic approach results in a limited use of restraint. Young people benefit from a thorough debrief after incidents to consider what prompted the behaviour requiring restraint. Furthermore staff analyse incidents to determine if their response could differ in the future.

Young people are safe from fire and other hazards as a result of thorough checks and procedures. The use of alarms on doors has not been specifically authorised by the placing authority or included in placement plans to ensure they do not restrict movement while considering safety.

Young people's risk assessments are robust and thoughtful which ensures young people are able to enjoy age-appropriate activities and take controlled risks in line with individual needs.

## **Leadership and management**

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

The Registered Manager and senior team have a thorough understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the home. Monitoring of the building and records is extremely rigorous and evaluative. This informs the excellent quality Regulation 34 reports which demonstrate the impact that living in the home has for young people. Reports in relation to visits made to the home to monitor its conduct in line with Regulation 33 are sound. Within these processes, the management team seeks the views of young people resulting in an evolving and improving service. The comprehensive development plan identifies key areas for improvement, including how requirements and recommendations from previous inspections have been met above and beyond expectations.

The Statement of Purpose clearly states the aims and objectives of the home and practice reflects the stated ethos. Staff fully understand the functions and purpose of the home and how this translates into positive practice with young people. The young people's guide is in a simple format which can be personalised and adapted according to need.

The home demonstrates excellent multi-agency working to improve outcomes for

young people. Specialist mental health services, youth workers and specialist police officers among others, are actively involved to ensure the best possible care and outcomes for young people. Services that are not performing are challenged appropriately. Young people are supported to complain, when necessary, about services they receive. There have been no complaints from the community and relationships with neighbours are consistently positive.

A consistent and enthusiastic staff team, who receive specialist training, care for young people. Training needs are identified in yearly appraisals, although not all staff have been appraised this year. Staff and young people all input into the appraisal process to ensure a true reflection of relationship building and dedication. All staff benefit from quality and evaluative supervision. Practice concerns are challenged rigorously and when needed through the disciplinary process. The restorative approach to young people's behaviour management is extended to resolving issues within the staff team, which has led to improved relations. Newly appointed staff complete a thorough induction programme specific to the service, based on the Induction Standards for the Children's Workforce.



## 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.