

## Inspection report for children's home

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| <b>Unique reference number</b> | SC040642           |
| <b>Inspection date</b>         | 05/10/2012         |
| <b>Inspector</b>               | Jennie Christopher |
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| <b>Provision subtype</b>       | Children's home    |

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| <b>Date of last inspection</b> | 27/02/2012 |
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## Service information

### Brief description of the service

The children's home is owned and managed by a local authority. It provides accommodation for up to seven young people with emotional and 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 flourish from living in a home where staff have extremely high expectations for their progress. They are incredibly motivated and enjoy outstanding outcomes through staff's encouragement to achieve. Staff work consistently to form and maintain effective relationships with parents, who say they have a 'lot of respect' for staff. Strong working relationships with education professionals and specialist services such as drug, alcohol and exploitation prevention teams to ensure a creative, highly individualised approach to care planning. Young people who live in the home and those that have moved on are extremely positive about their experiences, suggesting it is 'like a family' and that staff are a 'super cool bunch'. All young people benefit from the support of an enthusiastic staff team who provide consistent boundaries and care in a supportive environment.

Young people are routinely consulted on all aspects of their care both individually and as a group. They benefit from a service that continually considers their views and evolves where appropriate, to incorporate their ideas for how their home can be improved.

The committed management and senior team are aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the home and are focused on continued improvement in all areas. They effectively motivate and empower the experienced staff team, while ensuring a tailored training package is undertaken. This results in young people enjoying excellent care from an enthusiastic outcomes focused team. Areas identified for improvement as a result of the inspection include developing recording in the sanction and restraints log and safer closures to windows.

## Areas for improvement

### Recommendations

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

- ensure that where sanctions or restraints are used, children are encouraged to have their views recorded in the records kept by the home (NMS 3.18)
- record the option has been made available for young people to be examined after a restraint by a registered nurse or medical practitioner (NMS 3.16)
- ensure window closures are made safe and do not present significant risks to young people. (NMS 10.2)

### Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people make measurable progress in all aspects of their lives and those who have moved on talk positively of their experiences. Targeted, individualised support enables young people to build confidence, self-esteem and to have a sound understanding of their life story. A young person suggested she can now 'talk' as a result of living in the home, as they felt they have never had a voice before. Young people are respected and valued as individuals with staff's unconditional regard promoting positive attachments. As a result young people benefit from greater confidence and ability to form and sustain positive relationships with staff, family and peers. Young people manage their health needs with close consultation with staff and medical professionals, which aides a better understanding of healthy lifestyles and what this means for them. Promoting emotional well-being ensures young people are able to understand concerns regarding risk taking behaviours and to work positively towards reducing them. Through young people's concerted efforts alongside staff and specialist support, self-harm, drug use and being missing from care have all significantly reduced.

Attendance at school and college is exceptional. Support from staff and young people's enthusiasm has enabled them to achieve in line with their peers. Young people who struggle in education or employment are supported by staff to engage in positive activities in the home and community, to improve their life chances. Young people have positive relationships in the community through friendships and attending activities, such as ice skating, religious groups and holidays to Europe.

While living in the home, young people develop a wide range of practical skills for independent living through the 'How Ya Gonna Live' booklet, devised with young people's input, daily support in community based placements and through assessed use of the independent living flat. Young people were able to explain about their own independent living plan, which covers all aspects from personal care and laundry, to

budgeting and contacting banks and energy suppliers. Those who are not at the moving on stage also demonstrated the ability to do household chores and cook meals. Young people who have moved on have enjoyed success in college, higher education and employment. One ex-resident describes their experience of living in the home as 'awesome' and that staff 'really wanted to help' them understand and form appropriate, positive attachments.

## Quality of care

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

Young people thrive as a result of positive and supportive relationships with staff. They are clearly concerned for all aspects of young people's physical and emotional well-being and development, including their transitions to adulthood, no matter how difficult young people find this. Young people say they are 'grateful' for the support they receive and that 'they have changed for the better' as a result of this. Listening to and letting young people express themselves is entrenched in the ethos of the service. Young people have regular meetings where they can express their concerns. Minutes, recorded by both staff and young people are discussed in team meetings, and feedback and decisions of any points raised by young people are available in prominent positions within the home. They are supported through individual and group work to understand when their wishes cannot be acted upon. Young people are encouraged to be involved in the care planning process and to contribute to their weekly reviews of progress. These reviews provide a fluid record of successes and areas young people still need more help and support with. They also provide a platform to review placement plans, and through sharing them with placing social workers, ensure changes to plans are made when necessary and that successes are celebrated. Young people's consultation extends to them helping to design a new young people's guide and providing formal feedback for staff appraisals. All young people know how to make complaints and who they are able to complain to. Young people say that staff always 'try to find what is wrong and see how they can make it better'.

Staff consistently have high aspirations for all young people and thoroughly support their educational placements with strong communication between the home and schools and colleges. A robust plan details how to prepare young people for the school day and what actions to take should they be excluded from, refusing or out of school. This includes suggestions for educational activities and a timetable for staff and young people to follow, such as staff only having breaks the same time as young people for consistency. Young people who are at or approaching school leaving age have been successfully supported into further education to improve their outcomes and life chances. Young people say that staff support them with college work 'even when it is really hard!'

Young people generally enjoy good health. Smoking is discouraged and young people access specialist support if they want to quit. Poster displays of health related issues, including sexual health and addictions ensures young people have a greater awareness of the impact risk taking behaviour can have on their health, and who to

contact should they be concerned. Mental and emotional health specialists work closely with the home, including specialists in trafficked young people and those who self harm. To ensure consistency of approach and to support young people's emotional well-being, comprehensive emotional well-being plans are included in care plans, and reviewed regularly. Medication is stored appropriately and there is a thorough system to ensure safety when administering. Medical professionals, to ensure their continued suitability for individual young people, regularly review prescribed medication and homely remedies. All staff have at least basic first aid training in case of emergency.

The building is homely with many areas for independent or group interaction. Maintenance is on-going and window frames that are rotten are being replaced, but there is concern that some of the window closures could prove hazardous to young people and staff. The allotment area, made from recycled furniture is a plentiful source of fruit and vegetables, including pumpkins for Halloween. It is well maintained by young people with staff help and has become a popular past time.

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

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

Young people say they feel safe and that they are 'able to go to someone' if they are worried or concerned. Bullying is an issue at times, but young people are confident in the techniques staff have taught them to manage it, and that staff would intervene should this fail. Staff promote young people's welfare and do all they can to protect them from abuse or harm. They are confident in processes to follow should they be concerned for a young person's safety or welfare and are aware of the home's and local child protection procedures. Allegations and concerns are managed fairly and swiftly, ensuring all relevant professionals are informed and involved as appropriate. Young people do go missing from care, although this is significantly reducing. Local protocols with police consider individual young people's age, emotional situation and vulnerabilities, resulting in individualised procedures to follow if staff are concerned about a young person's whereabouts. Young people's files contain up-to-date photographs and descriptions of young people in case of emergency. Young people benefit from enhanced staff training and awareness of exploitation and joint working with external agencies specialising in young people who have been trafficked and exploited.

Positive behaviour is actively promoted within day-to-day living and through individual plans. Young people feel sanctions are appropriate and proportionate and although they do not always like it, they understand why they are treated differently depending on individual behaviour programmes. Young people receive written confirmation of their sanctions and are able to discuss these with staff, which they feel is a more 'adult approach'. This is not recorded in the sanction log however. Restraint records do not contain the offer of medical examination or to discuss the restraint. This currently is not impacting negatively on young people as there has been no need for restraint for over a year.

Young people are safe from fire and other hazards as a result of thorough checks, evacuations and procedures. The individualised risk assessments are robust and thoughtful. They ensure young people are able to enjoy age appropriate activities and take appropriate controlled risks, dependant on individual need and circumstances. The organisation's recruitment policy is thorough and ensures young people are protected from harm by robust personnel checks.

## **Leadership and management**

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

The provider meets the aims and objectives that are set out in the Statement of Purpose and staff fully understand the functions and ethos of the home. The young people's guide is currently being updated with young people's input to keep it in line with young people's needs and what they want to know.

The committed management team continually strives to improve the home and have a positive impact on young people's outcomes. Young people succeed as a result of being cared for by a consistent and enthusiastic staff team who hold the young people's best interest central to their work. They benefit from high quality and comprehensive training, including understanding of emotional disorders, risk taking, exploitation and preparation for adulthood. Further needs are identified in yearly appraisals, where both staff and young people provide views on all staff's performance, skills and qualities. Staff receive regular quality and evaluative supervision to further develop skills and practice. Thorough handovers and shift planning ensure all young people's needs are met.

Both managers and staff have formed effective multi-agency relationships to improve outcomes for young people. They actively source external support such as emotional well-being specialists and cultural groups, to ensure the best possible care and outcomes for young people. Relationships with local and specialist police officers have ensured continuity of approach and increased safety for the extremely vulnerable young people in their care. Positive relationships in the community are built through prompt responses to complaints. There have been no formal complaints for many years, and young people are encouraged to apologise when there are any issues. This has greatly improved relationships in the local community.

The management team have an excellent understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the home and effectively evaluate monthly monitoring of the building and records to progress the service. The impact the home has for the young people's outcomes is carefully considered and those who have moved on often keep in contact with staff in the home. Through six monthly evaluations demonstrate a significant reduction in risk taking behaviours, such as substance misuse alongside identifying areas for improvement. Where performance is not as expected or agreed, the management team follow this up by requesting missing paperwork or appointments, and where necessary ensuring young people gain the apologies they deserve for poor service. The managers actively seek the views of young people, their families and other stakeholders via questionnaires and discussions to help

inform robust plans for future development.



## 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 children's homes.