

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Maria McGranaghan
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This home provides care and accommodation for six young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties. The home is run by a local authority.

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 a safe, nurturing and child-centred environment. Improved outcomes are seen in education, emotional resilience and particularly the reduction in risk taking behaviours. Likewise, young people enjoy learning and attend appropriate educational provisions. Progress is consistent with young people achieving higher grades and undertaking GCSE examinations with projected A to C results. Young people are genuinely happy and enthusiastic about their personal progress.

Young people are safe and feel protected from significant harm. They have formed excellent relationships with staff and are extremely positive about their placements and the care they receive in the home.

Young people's care is well planned. Placement plans clearly encapsulate young people's needs and the services required to suitably meet them. Young people are supported by a highly committed and stable staff team who offer an excellent level of guidance enabling young people to make positive and productive change in their lives.

On the whole the home is effectively managed with a strong emphasis on providing a safe and caring home for young people. Monitoring systems are in place and provide suitable scrutiny in order to both maintain and enhance the performance in the home.

Despite these strengths there are weaknesses. Processes for managing some behaviours are not effective and do not offer consistent approach to behaviour

management. Likewise, not all placements made to the home are suitably planned or take account of the complex needs of some young people thus compromising the stability of the home. As a result three recommendations are made at this inspection.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure the home only provides admission to young people whose assessed needs they can reasonably expect to meet (NMS 11.2)
- ensure that sanctions for behaviour are clear, consistent, reasonable and fair and are understood by all staff and young people (NMS 3.8)
- ensure the home implements clear procedures for introducing young people to the home, the staff and other young people living there and ensure that admissions are suitable planned (NMS 11.1)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people make very good progress in their education, emotional resilience, their trust in staff and external professionals who work with them. Detailed residential care plans work together with consistent keywork sessions that assist young people to begin to understand their lives. On the whole young people engage well and are settled and happy in the home.

Young people's physical and emotional health needs are stringently assessed. Health care plans clearly identify any cause for concern and are supported by external services, including children and adolescent mental health services and forensic services. Likewise, young people receive visits from the sexual health advisory service and this provides them with valuable information to assist in making informed decisions and choices in their lives.

Young people's views and opinions are encouraged and respected in the home. Young people say, 'We have meetings each week and talk about all sorts. We have the girls group and this helps us understand about being in care.' It is clear that mutual respect for one another is a priority in the home. This practice enables young people to feel safe in order to discuss matters openly with staff or as a group.

Young people attend appropriate educational provision and school reports highlight significant progress particularly in attendance and attainment for most young people. Staff promote education offering time and commitment enabling young people to make consistent progress and gain the ability to recognise their own achievements. Young people say 'I have made so much progress, I didn't attend school and was

doing lots of things that I shouldn't have been doing. I now have 100% attendance and I am taking my GCSE's. I am a much happier person.'

Young people benefit from planned and supported contact with family and friends. Staff maintain close links with families and involve them where appropriate in the overall planning of the young people's care. For example, some parents work very closely with the home and this helps to maintain a consistent approach with regard to education and behaviour management. Likewise, detailed placement plans ensure that contact only takes place with whom it has been agreed and this is reviewed on a regular basis.

Staff encourage young people to develop independence skills in accordance with their age and ability. Good working relationships are formed with partner agencies to assist young people to develop skills in cooking, menu planning and shopping. Young people demonstrate ownership of their home have developed a sense of pride in the consistent achievements they make.

Planned and unplanned activities take place on a regular basis. Young people say, 'If we want to try something we just ask, the staff are great and will come with us to try anything.' Young people attend go-carting, fishing, cycling, walks and local youth clubs. Consequently, young people develop relationships outside of the home and their individual interests are appropriately encouraged and supported.

Quality of care

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

Young people live in an environment dedicated to enabling young people to achieve. Staff are extremely committed to young people and this is evident in the excellent relationships they have established. Young people and staff enjoy appropriate banter and are clearly relaxed in each other's company.

Young people are encouraged to demonstrate socially acceptable behaviour. Individual behaviour management plans work together with comprehensive risk assessments. This process enables staff to identify triggers for negative behaviour and develop strategies for positive behaviour management. Likewise, young people are supported by a range of external services. This helps young people to understand their individual circumstances and take positive steps to make necessary changes in their lives.

Comparatively, some young people require intensive support to manage their behaviour. Accordingly, staff provide a high level of supervision and support in order to maintain a safe and calm environment. However, sometimes their actions can be viewed as rewarding negative behaviour, for example, giving in to demands or ignoring certain behaviours. Young people say 'We know that some young people need a lot more help and support, but sometimes it can become annoying.' As a result, behaviour management processes become confused with different rules applying to different young people.

Young people know how to complain. Information is provided in the young people's guide and organisational complaints documents. Procedures for managing complaints ensure they are handled fairly and investigated thoroughly by the manager or external nominated person. Young people are provided with a documented outcome of their complaint and are encouraged to record their comments about this. As a result, young people are confident that their complaints will be appropriately managed.

Young people's placement plans are good and provide a clear picture of individual need. External services work in partnership with the home and ensure that young people are afforded professional support in order to maximise their overall potential. Similarly, plans clearly identify individual heritage and identity. Young people are engaged in developing a personal family tree using an on-line ancestry programme. Likewise, young people are encouraged to pursue their individual beliefs and are offered a range of material to develop their understanding of individual choice and difference.

Staff address young people's educational needs through proactive relationships with partner agencies. Attendance and individual grades are significantly improved, particularly for young people with a history of none attendance. Young people's changing attitudes and commitment to education demonstrates the dedication of a focused and child-centred team.

Young people live in a spacious, well-maintained home that blends into the residential area. Young people are central to making the house into their home and proudly display photographs, drawings and comments around the home.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Staff are appropriately trained in order to respond to suspicions or allegations of abuse. Good partnership working with external agencies ensures the most appropriate action is taken to safeguard young people. Likewise, risk assessments are clear and focused and regularly reviewed with young people in order to minimise risk factors in their lives. As a result, young people are afforded the opportunity to understand their own vulnerabilities and indeed where risks have reduced or indeed escalated. Young people say 'I love this home, it is my family. The staff are great and I have achieved so much. I am a different person than I used to be.'

The staff support a zero tolerance approach to bullying in the home. Young people are provided with good information and guidance to ensure their safety is maintained at all times. Young people feel confident that should a concern arise, staff will respond quickly and effectively. Young people confirm that bullying does not take place in the home and if matters arise they feel satisfied that this would be managed appropriately and in their best interest.

Young people live in a home where their safety and well-being is protected. Detailed individual missing from home plans are in place and records demonstrate the correct procedures and strategies are implemented without delay. Likewise, external agencies work with staff and young people to ensure a consistent approach is maintained should a young person go missing from home. Records held in the home provide good evidence that the frequency of young people going missing has significantly reduced.

Staff receive appropriate training in order to manage physical intervention within the home. Suitable procedures are in place and support the home's minimal intervention strategy. However, some young people do not have a good understanding of personal safety or the safety of others. Consequently, light touch physical intervention is necessary in order to safeguard young people. Records are clear and include detailed incident reports. Likewise, young people are offered a debrief in order to consider the action taken by staff and the impact of their behaviour on others.

Staff promote young people's on-going protection by undertaking regular fire drills and service tests making sure that all faults are efficiently addressed. Clear evidence highlights stringent monitoring of all systems within the home including the appropriate storage and administration of medication.

Recruitment and selection of staff is thorough and ensures young people are only looked after by staff that are appropriately checked in order to work in the home.

Leadership and management

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

The home is managed in accordance with the Statement of Purpose. The Registered Manager and deputy manager work closely with young people to monitor their overall welfare thus ensuring continuity of safe practice within the home. There is a clear development plan in place in order to secure future improvements. This highlights the strengths and weaknesses of the home.

Placements made to the home on the whole are suitable. It is clear that the manager and staff have worked hard to maintain a consistent approach to the care of young people and this is evident in the progress young people make. However, some placements made to the home have proven to be inappropriate. For example, where a placement is made without sufficient planning and where young people's needs have proven to be too complex for the home to manage. This has placed a strain on how the home functions. As a result, leaders and managers do not consistently take account of the impact upon young people when inappropriate placements are made to the home.

Internal and external monitoring systems provide the home with a suitable approach to the overall monitoring of care. The manager makes good use of reflective practice ensuring the views of external services and families are taken into account and are

reflected in the care young people receive.

The home employs a strong and extremely committed staff team who are suitably qualified. Staff receive appropriate support from the manager. Supervision takes place regularly and serves to identify training needs and personal development targets. Staff receive good quality training and this ensures that young people are looked after by the most suitable staff.

The manager and staff demonstrate a commitment to the young people living in the home and generate good opportunities to enhance the overall outcomes for young people. The effectiveness of this approach is measurable in the progress young people make.

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.