

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 up to six young people of either gender, between the ages of 11 and 17 years, with emotional and behavioural difficulties. It is a home 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 **adequate**.

Young people live in a caring and supportive environment that enables them to make adequate progress.

Young people are safe and feel protected from significant harm. They are positive about the care they receive and the relationships they have formed with staff. Young people are happy in a home that provides a nurturing and safe foundation.

Young people benefit from planned and personalised care. Placement plans and pathway plans are in place and overall, provide a satisfactory analysis of young people's care needs. Staff work together with external services and this assists young people to receive the right help, guidance and support in order to reach their full potential.

Young people have formed very good relationships with staff. Suitable staff ratios ensure that young people are afforded the care and attention they need in order to feel safe and secure in the home. One young person said, 'the staff are great, they help me all the time I really like it here.' Staff receive regular training, supervision and support that enable them to have a good understanding of young people's needs and how they are to be met.

The home is suitably managed and the manager places the emphasis on providing a good standard of child care practice. Monitoring systems are in place and ensure that care is reviewed regularly. Where safety is a concern appropriate measures are taken

to minimise risk.

Despite these strengths there are weaknesses. Although staff promote the value of education for young people, attendance is inconsistent. Consequently young people are not in receipt of good quality educational experiences required to enhance life chances. Placement plans identify achievable targets and goals for young people. However, the quality of records held in relation to key work sessions does not reflect the level of engagement with young people or the progress young people are making. Likewise, placement plans do not suitably address young people's individual identity in order to respond effectively to their care needs. Records of restraint are in place and highlight a significant reduction. However records do not include a section for young people to comment about their experiences. Likewise not all young people have up-to-date behaviour management plans to support how their behaviour is managed consistently in the home. Young people wishing to develop individual hobbies and interests are not consistently supported to engage in such activities. As a result, young people lose interest in their personal aspirations.

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 placement plans and residential care plans pay full attention to young people's individual identity and cultural needs (Volume 5, statutory guidance paragraph 2.35)
- ensure where sanctions, disciplinary measures or restraint are used, young people are encouraged to have their views recorded in the records kept in the home (NMS 3.18)
- ensure young people are helped by staff to achieve their education or training goals. In particular, this relates to the need to ensure young people's daily routine is structured to provide them with learning opportunities when they are not in full time education. (NMS 8.4, 8.8)
- ensure young people pursue individual interests and hobbies. This includes taking part in a range of activities including leisure activities and trip (NMS 7.2)
- ensure that young people's emotional and behavioural needs are met in accordance to their plan (NMS 3.7)
- ensure each young person's placement plan is monitored by a keyworker within the home who ensures that the requirements of the plan are implemented in the day-to-day care of the young person. Specifically ensuring all information is up to date and signed. (NMS 25.2)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people make adequate progress in their growing emotional resilience and trust in staff and professionals who offer additional support. There are a range of services in place that assist young people to understand their lives in order to take positive steps forward. Likewise regular individual key worker sessions provide a supportive forum for young people to review their care. However, the quality of records does not clearly capture the work being undertaken with young people.

Young people are consulted about the running of the home. One young person said, 'staff talk to us all the time and they listen, we get to choose the colours for the home and what should go on the menu, I really like it here.' Young people take part in regular meetings including the Voices for Choices forum that enables them to have their say about their experiences in the home. Similarly, an independent advocate and children's rights representative are frequent visitors to the home and assist young people to make positive choices in their lives.

Staff support the educational achievement for young people and work hard to secure school attendance and achievement. For some young people this is successful and has resulted in young people taking GCSE examinations and gaining college placements. However, for others attendance at school is extremely low and as a result impacts upon their ability to learn and achieve in order to increase their life chances. Young people enjoy good health and are registered with medical practitioners. Health care plans are in place and suitably address individual health care needs.

Planned and unplanned activities take place with young people enjoying swimming, running and attending fitness classes. However, young people's individual interests are not consistently responded to. As a result, young people lose interest in pursuing their personal aspirations.

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. Detailed contact arrangements ensure that contact only takes place with whom it has been agreed and this is reviewed on a regular basis.

Quality of care

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

Young people live in a supportive and nurturing environment. Staff display clear warmth for young people and this is evident in the ambitions they hold for them. Young people are genuinely happy and confident in the company of staff.

Young people's positive behaviour and smallest achievement is celebrated within the home. Praise and special rewards are consistently recorded and assist young people to develop an understanding of what is acceptable behaviour and provide a useful

tool for addressing some negative behaviour.

Similarly, young people benefit from individual behaviour management plans and risk assessments that identify triggers for negative behaviour. Restorative justice is used to ensure young people understand the impact of their behaviour and how they can make a positive change. However, not all behaviour management plans are up to date and as a consequence there are inconsistencies in the management in some young people's behaviour.

Young people know how to complain. Information is available in the young people's guide and notice board and includes contact numbers for external agencies. Likewise young people benefit from regular contact with independent advocates and children's rights representatives. One young person said, 'I know how to complain and there are loads of people I can complain to if I need to. I really like it here and I don't have anything to complain about.' The positive relationship between staff and young people ensures that the young people's views are valued and that they feel confident to raise matters. Complaints from external sources are well documented and provide good evidence of the home taking appropriate action to address matters.

Placement plans for young people are in place and are reviewed by the manager to ensure the care offered is meeting their individual needs. A multi-agency approach assists to highlight the changing needs of young people and this ensures the appropriate steps are taken to address them. Young people benefit from individual targets to assist them in meeting their goals. However, the plans do not incorporate young people's individual identity which is central to ensuring care practice inspires pride in their identity and heritage. Likewise, young people are not consistently involved in the review of their placement plan. Consequently their views and opinions about the help they receive are not recorded and addressed.

Staff work hard to promote young people's educational needs through good relationships with partner agencies. For some young people their achievement within education has excelled since living in the home. However for other young people attendance is minimal and attempts to structure the time spent in the home is inconsistent. Consequently the number of young people not attending school has increased since the last inspection.

Young people live in a homely environment which blends into the residential area. They are encouraged to choose the décor of their bedroom and personalise it to reflect their personality and interests. As a result young people have developed ownership of their home and say that it feels like home.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people live in a home where their safety and well-being is protected. Staff work proactively with external agencies to ensure a consistent approach is maintained should a young person be missing from home. As a result there is a

distinct reduction in young people being missing. Clear and coordinated risk management assists young people to understand issues regarding risk taking behaviours and personal safety. This process has proved successful in assisting young people to make sustained steps in acknowledging factors in their lives.

Staff undertaken child protection training in order that they are able to respond to suspicions or allegations of abuse. Clear and focused risk assessments and daily chronologies are in place to encapsulate individual risk factors for young people. A consistent review of assessments ensures people are afforded the opportunity to understand where risks have reduced or indeed escalated. Together with their key worker young people offer an overall evaluation of successful strategies used to reduce risk and identify where further support is required. This process assists them to develop ownership of their behaviour and supports them to understand how to make positive change in their lives.

Young people confirm that bullying does not take place in the home and information from young people's surveys supports this view. Staff receive training to ensure young people are provided with the right information and guidance to protect them from incidents of bullying. Racist or derogatory comments are swiftly acted upon including one to one direct work and group sessions. It is undoubtedly clear that staff have demonstrated effective practice in highlighting the issue of bullying with young people. As a result they are in tune with the effects of bullying on themselves and others and support a zero tolerance approach in the home and community.

Young people are encouraged to demonstrate socially acceptable behaviour. Methods such as praise and reward encourage participation and have proved to be successful. Where young people display negative behaviour, appropriate measures are in place to assist young people to accept the consequence of their behaviour.

Staff receive appropriate training in order to safely manage physical intervention within the home. Staff are clear that physical intervention is only used to prevent a young person harming themselves or others and as a result the use of this intervention is minimal. Where physical intervention has been applied, clear records detail the action taken, the length of time and the debrief offered to young people. However, the system to enable young people to record their own views and comments is not currently in place. One young person said, 'I don't think they use restraint here, I've never seen it.' A staff member said, 'We don't use full restraint, we usually guide young people away in a calm and relaxed way and this helps to calm them down.' Young people are supported to understand the impact of their behaviour on themselves and others thus offering good opportunities to make positive change.

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, administration and recording of medication.

The home employs a robust recruitment procedure that ensures young people are

looked after by staff that are appropriately checked in order to work in the home. Visitors are appropriately vetted and this helps to make sure that young people are protected while in their home. The staff team remains stable which provides consistency for all young people living in the home. There are no volunteers working in the home.

Health and safety risk assessments are regularly reviewed and internal checks are consistently undertaken in order to maintain the overall safety of the young people living in the home.

Leadership and management

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

The home is efficiently managed meeting the aims of 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.

Internal and external monitoring systems mainly 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 reflective of the care young people receive. However effective systems are not in place to consistently update records or review the quality of work being undertaken with young people.

The home has made good progress in addressing the previous recommendation made at the last inspection. Specifically, Regulation 34 summaries are completed and forwarded to Ofsted for review.

The home employs a strong 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.

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.