

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Caroline Oldham
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home is managed and run by the local authority. It provides residential care for up to six young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: a service that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

Good: a service 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 each have a placement plan designed to meet their specific needs. These are frequently reviewed and updated as the young people make progress. Staff have high aspirations and clear goals for the young people in their care, and consequently young people make good progress. Young people are actively involved in their highly personalised care plans and reviews, and know the plans for their future.

The quality of care in the home is good, and young people respond well to the consistent messages and expectations. They make good progress in all aspects of their welfare and development, for example, attending education on a regular basis. They are involved in many aspects of the running of the home, but young people's meetings are very staff orientated. Young people say that they like the staff team, but sometimes find the boundaries and rules difficult. It is a credit to the staff that they work hard with the young people to maintain consistent boundaries and high expectations despite this difficulty.

Leaders and the manager have systems in place to monitor progress and have a thorough understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the home. There are development plans in place, but currently no system for identifying trends and issues of concern. The manager has a good understanding of the operational issues and provides a flexible service offering some outreach work to young people and their carers. Staff confirm that they are given good quality regular supervision, and access to all relevant training. All the staff team talk with enthusiasm about the young people and are keen to do their very best for them, consequently young people show pride in achievements as diverse as not going missing, to running 10k races.

Young people are kept safe through excellent working practices, good up-to-date risk assessments and strategies drawn up in conjunction with the young people. Consequently young people are able to enjoy some freedoms within clearly agreed boundaries. They respond very well to this and they say that they feel happy and safe in their home. However, some excellent reflective work following a sanction or restraint is not well documented. Staff have a good understanding of safeguarding issues and are especially vigilant regarding any incidents of bullying.

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 the manager identifies any concerns about specific incidents and identifies patterns and trends (NMS 21.2)
- improve recording of the reflective work and discussions with young people after a sanction or a restraint to show how they are encouraged to take responsibility for their behaviour (NMS 3.6)
- improve how the wishes, feeling and views of children are taken into account in developing the home, for example during young people's meetings. (NMS 1.7)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people are making good progress in developing a positive self-view and building emotional resilience. They are starting to make and form attachments and receive specialist support where they have difficulties. Staff help young people to understand their background, how they can make the best of their opportunities and how to avoid future difficulties. Consequently young peoples are reducing their risk taking behaviour, becoming less anxious, and enjoy their education and their hobbies. Staff help young people to make good progress in developing a positive self-view, and building emotional resilience. Examples were shared of young people developing the confidence to go into the town and making significant improvements in their self-care. They are establishing respectful relationships, and wanting to please others. Young people engage well in conversation and show insight. They talk with enthusiasm and confidence about their hobbies and interests.

Staff consider all aspects of young people's health. When a young person is admitted, they are registered with the local health professionals and all health needs are actively pursued. Young people are encouraged to enjoy an active lifestyle including hiking and camping, riding bikes and swimming. They are involved in preparing freshly cooked meals with plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables, and have a good understanding of living a healthy lifestyle. Young people are helped to recognise possible substance abuse, and to seek help and support appropriately.

Staff actively support young people to attend education and work experience. They have regular contact with all the educational placements and work hard to maintain these. Consequently young people re-engage in education, and are making excellent progress. For some this has been the opportunity to remain in a placement, and for others it has been a fresh start. All young people are making the most of the opportunities provided for them.

Young people are involved in the day-to-day running of the home through regular discussions with staff. They choose how to decorate their bedrooms and have been actively involved in the recent refurbishments. They attend residents' meetings, but currently the agenda is quite staff focused, impacting the effectiveness of how young people can influence the running of the home. Young people help to keep the home looking clean and tidy, and have recently painted a colourful mural in the courtyard area. Some young people are actively involved in volunteering in the community by working in local charity shops.

Young people benefit from appropriate contact with family, friends and other people who are important to them. The staff are extremely sensitive in arranging, monitoring and supporting contact visits to ensure that they are fruitful enjoyable events. They ensure good communication links with family members to make the best arrangements, and to work in the young person's long term interests. This means that some young people are forming good bonds with family members, and making appropriate attachments.

Young people are developing budgeting skills, home keeping and cooking skills commensurate with their age and understanding. All are learning how to keep themselves safe, and consequently risk taking behaviour is significantly reducing. When young people leave the home, they make good appropriate transitions, if appropriate, they are supported by staff from the home, and some keep in touch to report on their progress.

Quality of care

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

Young people are establishing very good relationships with the staff team. Young people talk with openness and honesty about issues that concern them and staff respond with help and support. They quickly respond with referrals to external experts, and do everything possible to help the young people in their care. Staff have high aspirations and hopes for young people and highly individualised agreements encourage cooperation and improvements in behaviour. There is also an excellent reward system in place which encourages good behaviour. Consequently young people generally behave well; respecting staff and one another. Each young person has an individual crisis management plan which is reviewed monthly, and following any incidents. Staff assess risks and work with young people to establish agreements for behaviour.

Staff are very skilled at helping young people understand why it may not be possible to act upon their wishes and to set clear limits in place. This is a significant achievement for some young people who have had very few boundaries and restriction previously. This ability to negotiate and compromise with young people is a real strength of the staff team. Consequently young people generally respect the rules and agreements and sanctions are rare.

Young people are given a clearly written guide prior to admission to the home. This includes the complaints procedure. Young people say that they know how to make a complaint although they have not done so. There is also a more informal system for dealing with minor complaints, without going through the formal process. Young people are taken seriously at every level, and their views generally influence the running of the home and their care.

There are detailed placement and care plans for all young people, these include cultural background, and personal identity. They detail the specific, individualised needs of the young person and where appropriate their religious and cultural needs and interests. Where young people have specific needs these are met through, for example, supporting attendance at church. Staff regularly review the plans, revise strategies and extend boundaries when young people make progress. All staff are made aware through thorough handover meetings and staff meetings. Consequently staff offer consistent care and young people remain at the centre of care practice. Each young person is treated as an individual and plans demonstrate this. For example, a young person struggling to read might be offered a kindle which has the capacity to display pictures as well as text, whilst another is taken to a book shop to purchase books. Activities are sometimes for a small group such as remote control car racing and camping, or individual such as running. Social workers say that staff are doing, 'a cracking job' and managing very complex needs. All those spoken to said that young people residing at the home were making very good progress, and in some instances, 'significant progress'. Key work is given a high priority and direct work covers many areas of young people's lives as defined in the placement plan.

The home provides a very healthy environment and staff work proactively with other agencies to meet the medical and psychological needs of young people. Young people are actively involved in choosing the weekly menu, with plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables in the daily diet. Regular opportunities for physical activities are incorporated into daily living through household chores, cycling, swimming and football.

All young people are in education and new residents are quickly found appropriate placements. Staff have established very good working relationships with the staff in the education placements. Consequently young people have good attendance, and engage well, including sometimes staying on after school to enjoy extra curricular activities such as horse riding.

Young people are actively involved in choosing how they spend their time from a very broad range of opportunities provided by the home. There is an emphasis on outdoor activities such as long distance walking, camping and cycling. However, art

and music are also popular and trips to the cinema and bowling alley are regular events.

The home is beautifully maintained and spacious there is a lovely garden for games. The location enables young people to access local shops and services, and there are good public transport links. Young people are actively encouraged to personalise their bedrooms by choosing their own bedding and displaying posters. They take responsibility for cleaning their bedrooms, managing their laundry, helping with meals and sharing household chores. Young people have keys to their rooms and their files are kept securely locked.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people say that they feel safe in the home and they know the staff will protect them from harm. For example records show that any incident of bullying is quickly and appropriately managed to prevent further occurrence. Staff all receive training in child protection procedures and have a good working knowledge of what to do if an allegation is made against a member of staff. There are comprehensive individual risk assessments for each young person that are regularly updated as situations progress. Social workers say that their risk management, is 'exceptional'. There are comprehensive protocols in place for when young people go missing. However, although young people may be admitted with significant histories of going missing the home is excellent at significantly reducing this and keeping young people safe. The home has established good channels of communication and support with the police and this ensures that the welfare of the young people remains paramount and young people are kept safe.

There are excellent reward systems in place which young people engage with successfully, leading to young people feeling a sense of pride in their achievements. Staff provide consistent boundaries and achieve good cooperation with young people. Sanction and physical restraint are very rare occurrences, and most behaviour is managed through negotiation. When sanctions and restraints occur there is excellent direct reflective work but this is not always well documented.

The staff recruitment and selection process is rigorous, and comprehensive checks are made to ensure that young people are always cared for by appropriately experienced staff. This ensures that all staff are suitable to work with young people and they are kept safe from harm.

The environment is very well maintained and kept safe through a system of weekly and monthly internal safety checks and risk assessments. In addition, services such as electricity, electrical appliances and fire fighting equipment are regularly checked by the appropriate professional companies. Fire drills are carried out regularly, and particularly when a new young person is admitted. Visitors to the home have their identification checked and they are signed in.

Leadership and management

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

The manager is held in high regard by the staff team and the staff are all encouraged to take on specific tasks to develop their skills and build on their strengths. The action and recommendations from the last inspection have all been addressed. A regulation 34 report has now been submitted. The forms relating to missing children have been revised to ensure all required information is recorded and young people are now commenting on documents such as the sanctions and restraints reports. The recommendation for young people to read their placement plans has been appropriately managed and the home are achieving this through breaking the information down into manageable areas appropriate to the age and understanding of the young person. The home continues to make improvements and develop the staff team. The registered person carries out excellent monthly monitoring visits which are rigorous and always include consultation with young people. The manager also has a comprehensive system of internal audits, although this currently does not identify trends and issues of concern. Appropriate and timely action is taken to notify the appropriate authorities and persons following significant events and incidents.

There is a clear Statement of Purpose, which is regularly reviewed to reflect changes. It provides an accurate reflection of the home. Placing authorities are clear about the aims and objectives of the home and what services and facilities it provides. They say that the home offers, 'a very bespoke service' for each young person and young people make, 'significant progress'. Young people are very clear about the purpose of their placement in the home and their future plans, and they are actively involved in the review process. Staff are also clear about their roles, and how to access additional support for young people.

The home has a very stable staff team with few changes. Staff rotas are designed to offer continuity of care throughout the day, and staffing levels are generous to ensure that young people receive the levels of care they need. Staff receive excellent training, some is now on-line to ensure easy access to courses without delay. All staff are suitably qualified or completing their qualification. All staff receive frequent supervision and staff say that they are able to seek advice and support when necessary. The manager confirms that she is well supported by senior management. The home is financially well resourced.

Care planning documents demonstrate that staff have a very thorough approach to meet young people's individual needs. They have working documents with high levels of detail that are reviewed and revised as progress is made. All documentation is kept in a locked filing cupboard within a lockable office.

There are good relationships with the local community, and the local police work closely with the home.

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.