

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Julia Toller
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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.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: a service that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

Good: a service that exceeds minimum requirements

Satisfactory: a service that only meets minimum requirements

Inadequate: a service that does not meet minimum requirements

Service information

Brief description of the service

The home is a large terraced property located in a residential area with good access to public transport which provides access to the city centre.

Inside there are two main lounges, one of which is used as a quiet area. There is also a dining room, kitchen and staff office located on the ground floor. All children's bedrooms are located on the first floor. There is also one bathroom with a bath and shower and one separate shower room.

This service provides residential accommodation for up to three looked after young people, aged between 10 and 17 years old, who have complex emotional and behavioural needs.

The home is owned by a private company.

Overall effectiveness

The overall effectiveness is judged to be **good**.

The home takes positive steps to meet the diverse and complex needs of the young people placed. The main strengths come from the strong links the home has with schools and the placing authority social workers and an emphasis on healthy eating and outdoor activities. This promotes development in all aspects of personal, social and health education and citizenship. Staff ensure that young people receive an individual service designed to meet their personal needs. Staff have good knowledge of the young people they are working with, ensuring their needs are consistently met. The home values the rights of individuals to respect and dignity.

Young people said that they are able to make their views known and have a say in what happens in the home. They are involved in decisions about what food they eat, what they do in their spare time, how the house is decorated and the plans for their future. Young people said, "staff are good they take us places" and that they feel safe living at the home.

Social workers who have placed young people within the home are complimentary about the care that their young person has received. They state that 'the change in this young person's behaviours has been phenomenal, the placement has been very positive'; and that staff are 'focussed and proactive'. Social workers consistently report that the 'service is really good at communication, they (the social workers) know what happens when it happens'.

The home has a friendly atmosphere where everyone usually gets along and young

people enjoy positive relationships with staff. Staff value the young people as individuals. They are helpful and they clearly enjoy spending time with the young people. Professional and personal boundaries with young people are clear and are consistent with good childcare.

As a result of this inspection, one requirement is made. This relates to window restrictors at the home.

Areas for improvement

Statutory Requirements

This section sets out the actions which must be taken so that the registered person/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Reg.	Requirement	Due date
23 (2001)	ensure that all parts of the home to which children have access are so far as is reasonably practicable free from hazards to their safety in particular that window restrictors are fitted to windows. (Regulation 23 (a))	12/07/2011

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people say they have a positive relationship with staff, which is helping them improve their self-image and build up emotional resilience. Care staff take interest in the welfare of young people by listening and supporting them gently through significant events in their lives. Young people say that staff help them to identify how they feel about what has happened to them and what they want to achieve in the future. They are confident that their views are heard and any decisions made are explained to them including having access to advocates and children's rights officers. Young people have important relationships preserved by the dedication of the staff who work to rebuild fragile family links. This commitment is helping re-establish meaningful contact with people who are important to young people's lives. Young people, have good opportunities to influence decisions that have an impact on their futures. They speak highly about the staff and describe the home as 'sound'.

Young people are given good support to re-engage in education where a full range of opportunities are given to bridge the gaps from previously missed opportunities. The use of creative incentives provides young people with the additional encouragement they need to attend school. Young people are overcoming some significant barriers in their learning and attainment as a result of this remarkable support. In short periods of time from young people commencing their placements, good progress is noticeable. This level of support goes beyond age 16 to help maximise every opportunity for young people to gain qualifications and vocational skills. This is providing them with both an academic preparation and practical life skills in readiness for adulthood.

Young people have substantial help in planning a successful transition to adulthood that takes into account their very complex needs, in which their views are always listened to. Young people have excellent access to multi-agency health care that provides the essential support they need to help safeguard their physical, emotional and psychological health.

Quality of care

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

Young people say that they are asked for their views about the running of their home and their care, being supported and encouraged to express their views and communicate effectively. Young people say that staff are helpful to them and that they enjoy spending time with them. Staff act as positive role models and use effective communication skills to encourage young people to develop socially acceptable behaviour. They place great emphasis on building positive relationships with young people and understanding young people's behaviour.

The home can meet a wide range of young people's potential needs, including healthy lifestyles, culture, dealing with problems, education, gender, relationships and personal care. Young people have every opportunity to talk to staff about their problems and needs. Staff are comfortable discussing sensitive issues, such as identity, sexual health and family relationships with young people.

The service has a well developed complaints procedure and all complaints are responded to promptly. Young people say that they know about the complaints procedure and they are confident that any complaint will be taken seriously.

Young people know about their written placement plans which identify their individual and personal needs, these are discussed openly between young people and staff. Staff implement the plans and keep records about young people's progress and experiences. Young people's placement plans are reviewed regularly to make sure that they are up to date and continue to meet their needs. This helps young people to receive a consistent approach to meet their care needs. Staff seek young people's views and ensure that they are listened to and their views about their lives taken into account.

Where appropriate, young people see their families frequently and are in regular contact by telephone. They have clear arrangements for contact with their families to help them maintain and build positive relationships. Staff actively ensure young people have suitable regular contact and that the arrangements promote and safeguard young people's welfare.

Young people's health needs are identified in the pre-placement planning meeting and a health plan shows how these needs will be addressed. The home has good working relationships with local health services, and young people's health is promoted because they are registered with a local general practitioner, dentist and other appropriate health care services. The home follows up all health checks that are outstanding when a new young person is admitted, for example, staff ensure that all young people are up to date with vaccinations. The home ensures that referrals are made for specialist health assessments where necessary. Good systems are in place to routinely monitor young people's health, and action is taken to address any concerns.

Staff follow detailed guidance relating to the medication. This means that young people receive the medication they need at the appropriate times. All medicines are stored safely in a suitable, locked cabinet. This means that young people's health needs overall are met to a good standard.

The staff support young people's learning through promoting education, and all young people are achieving in their educational placements. Young people are also assisted in their preparation towards adulthood and developing life skills, such as cooking, form filling and budgeting. The staff team provide young people with constant praise for all their achievements.

Young people have access to a range of activities and they are encouraged to share leisure time with families when appropriate. Young people also engage with staff in attending leisure facilities in order to try new experiences. Young people are gaining confidence in their abilities through guidance given by staff.

Young people live in a homely and comfortable environment that meets their needs. Young people like the accommodation and have personalised the home to reflect their interests and individual tastes. The house is maintained, decorated and furnished to a good standard. The outdoor area is maintained and used by the young people for relaxation. They have also been involved in the planting of a range of vegetables which has developed an active interest for some young people and staff.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Staff demonstrate a good commitment to preserving the confidentiality, dignity and privacy of young people and they have a good understanding of safeguarding issues. This is demonstrated where disclosures or allegations are made by young people. The home has a specific named person designated to deal with allegations to ensure that systems are followed appropriately. Young people say that they feel safe living in this home and that they would speak to staff if they were worried or upset. This ensures that young people are protected from abuse.

The home actively takes steps to make sure that young people missing from home are protected. If young people go missing staff will try to find them and keep in touch by mobile telephone to encourage them to return and ensure they are safe. Staff are aware of current legislation and government guidance and do not exceed the measures they can take to prevent a child leaving without permission. The home has developed good links with the local police and follows agreed local protocols regarding young people missing from care. Incidents are recorded appropriately and show that levels of absence have significantly reduced for most young people. Risk assessments are in place detailing individual needs and agreed strategies to support and protect young people.

There are good monitoring systems in place whereby the management team look at behaviour management to ensure that appropriate action has been taken, and it is fair and reasonable. Young people have clear and consistent boundaries and know what is expected of them and what is unacceptable. Young people say that staff praise them when they do well and reward them. They also say that staff offer help and reassurance when they are upset and help them deal with their anxieties and frustrations in a positive way. Staff assist young people to learn to manage their behaviour and solve problems. Young people are aware of what is expected of them. Physical intervention is used as a last resort and is not common place. Recording systems for sanctions show that staff are reasonable in their approach when applying consequences and young people feel that sanctions given are fair.

Staff carry out regular health and safety checks of the premises, including certification for gas, electric and fire safety checks. However, there are some window restrictors that are broken which does not fully safeguard young people. The vetting of staff and visitors is also thorough to make sure young people are protected. The home carries out recruitment checks, including the verification of written references, before staff start work at the home. This helps to safeguard young people. The home has sound policies and procedures for ensuring that young people are safe and operates good systems to reflect how young people's welfare is promoted.

Leadership and management

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

Leadership provides a strong sense of commitment to openness, honesty and inclusiveness of young people in making decisions. The staff treat young people with the utmost respect and dignity and support them in overcoming significant and complex barriers. Staff tailor support to respect the cultural, ethnic and religious needs of individuals.

Staff say that they are provided with good quality regular training, support and resources to enable them to understand the developmental needs of young people. Joint working is common place. Multi-agency partnerships are forged with health services, placing authorities and schools, all working together in the best interests of young people. Young people confirm they are able to be involved in meetings where key decisions are made about their futures, including contributing to decisions.

Care and pathway plans are drawn up with a multi-disciplinary partnership. This ensures young people are getting the right access to resources, benefits and education, necessary for achieving progress during transition stages. This is managed with realistic levels of what young people can achieve and with the right balance of providing safeguarding to meet their diverse needs. All records that are compiled are kept up to date and stored securely.

The staff have a strong focus on promoting positive outcomes and to enhance the well-being of young people. They work proactively to help young people overcome barriers and to succeed. Handovers are comprehensive to ensure key messages are passed over, which in turn ensures staff are sufficiently informed about changes to the health and welfare needs of young people.

The home takes a proactive approach to building and sustaining strong relationships with the local community and most importantly neighbours. Whenever an incident does emerge, young people are always encouraged to apologise. This is building up equal respect which means good relationships are maintained and creates a sense of community inclusion.

The management team are consistent at monitoring standards at the home and sign appropriate records as part of their internal quality assurance. Regular Regulation 33 visits take place to provide additional quality assurance mechanisms and involve consulting with young people wherever possible. The management has a strong commitment to meeting young people's needs. The level of progress young people have made, in a short period of time in some instances despite their complex needs is a testament to the impact the management have made to help young people aspire, irrespective of their ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation or faith.

The home has a clear, accessible and comprehensive Statement of Purpose that clearly sets out its aims and objectives. These objectives are being utilised in everyday practice, inclusive of ensuring young people feel safe, protected and well cared for.

The home has taken action to address previous recommendations rising from the previous inspection. For example, greater emphasis has been made on medication

administration to ensure this is an accurate record of all medications administered to young people.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.