

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Angus Mackay
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home is registered to accommodate and care for no more than three young people. The home provides medium- to long-term residential care to young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties. Emergency placements can be facilitated dependant on the stability and mix of the young people in residence at the time. The home encourages young people to attend school but can provide home tuition from qualified teachers. Work with young people is advised by a psychotherapist who also provides support to the staff team.

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**.

This is a well-managed home providing good personalised care to young people aiding them to develop a clear understanding of their own strengths and areas for development. Young people like the staff and enjoy good relationships with them showing and receiving warmth and affection. Young people use these good relationships to develop their own sense of personal worth. One social worker commented that the young person had made continued improvement in his placement. The social worker said, 'Staff have been very supportive of him in a difficult situation. He has benefited from key working and regular counselling.'

Young people build up their attendance at school from virtually nothing to full-time engagement. Progress in attainment is linked to the amount of time in school. Staff provide good support to the young people to aid their successful engagement in school. One social worker praised innovative changes to the timetable which completely changed the young person's perception of school from a punishment to a reward.

Young people demonstrate improving behaviours in the home reducing instances of restraint, sanctions and instances of going missing. All young people have improved in these areas for example there has been only one occasion when a young person went missing since the last inspection. A social worker said, 'The young person has

made massive progress while in the home. He is in full-time education now, has reduced restraints and never goes missing.' Individual young people are exceptionally proud of their success in improving behaviours such as no restraints this year and no missing from care this year. The home is excellent at helping young people to build links with their families and develop community links. Social workers praise their flexibility in organising and supervising family contacts.

The manager of the home is well liked by staff and young people who describe her as, 'very good, supportive and helpful.' The manager makes good use of internal and external monitoring information to develop the service. Social workers praise the excellent communication from the manager. This ensures any incidents are immediately known about and monthly progress reports provide an excellent overview of young people's progress. Files are excellently maintained with information being clear and helpful to meeting the needs of the young people. The manager has successfully addressed previous recommendations. During the inspection, the manager acted on deficits in recording of restraints, practise of fire drills and in local consultation of child protection procedures. The responsible individual has not updated the Statement of Purpose to reflect the changes in management and has not fully enacted measures to address local concerns. The manager and responsible individual are working closely with community health services to enhance the staff training.

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 there has been a physical restraint children are always given the opportunity to be examined by a registered nurse or medical practitioner (NMS 3.16)
- ensure staff receive sufficient training on health and hygiene issues and first aid with particular emphasis on health promotion and communicable diseases (NMS 6.9)
- ensure that all staff and young people have practised the emergency escape plan so that they know what to do in an emergency (NMS 10.8)
- ensure that the child protection procedures are submitted for consideration and comment to the Local Safeguarding Children's Board and to the Local Authority Designated Officer for Child protection and are consistent with the local policies and procedures (NMS 20.4)
- ensure that there are clear and effective procedures for controlling the activities of the home; including any serious incidents, allegations or complaints about the provision, with particular regard to neighbourhood relationships (NMS 21.1)
- ensure the Statement of Purpose is reviewed and approved. (NMS13.3)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people, with good support from staff, develop a positive self-view and understanding of their cultural background and personal needs. Young people work over time with the therapist to enhance their relationships and ability to sustain attachments. Staff's application of detailed placement and health plans aids young people in successfully meeting their care needs.

Health care is good and young people take part in very regular key-working sessions to reinforce positive life choices. Staff are aware of the diverse health needs of the young people and of actions needed to maintain good health in all of the young people. Staff bring in specialist health workers as necessary. External health services praise the staff and the manager of the home for their support, openness and ability to assist young people in accessing these programmes.

Young people engage positively in the programmes designed to reduce their offending behaviours or behaviours which put them at risk. Young people are not engaging in these high-risk behaviours and social workers say staff are skilled at helping them to learn alternative behaviours. One social worker said, 'Staff deal with the problem in a very appropriate way; they do not reinforce negative behaviours or give in to threats. They have been managing it very effectively and keeping the young person safe.'

Young people all attend the home's own school. They are all working towards a move to either mainstream school or college. The home works very closely with the school, to implement very individual education programmes for each young person. Staff adjust the programmes in consultation with the social worker and the young person, to provide a positive experience for the young person. Young people are all improving their engagement in education with this very structured support from staff. Young people are gradually improving their initially low attainment levels. One social worker commented, 'The biggest improvement in the young person is their behaviour and engagement in education. They have gone from only one day in school to full-time engagement in a full curriculum.'

Staff assist young people to maintain friendships and family contacts. Social workers say that staff manage family contact, 'really well; the home prepares young people well, for these meetings and remain flexible to last minute changes.' Young people say that the home helps them to build up local contacts and friendships by granting them unsupervised time out of the home. Social workers say that this process is very well supervised between them and the home, providing young people with manageable time out with successful outcomes. Young people say that they start off with small periods gradually increasing with success. Young people further develop self-confidence and social skills through engagement in clubs and activities in the community. All young people have taken part in charitable events encouraging their positive contribution to their community.

Young people engage in mature discussions about future planning and about their preparation for independence. They comment positively on the work done with care staff to build up a skills assessment and teach them where they have deficits. They clearly identify their confidence at budgeting, cooking meals and personal care. Young people express reasonable concerns about where they will be cared for in the future. Young people voiced particular concerns about being forced into independence too early with inadequate support for them to succeed. The home is very supportive of young people in these transition situations working closely with social workers to achieve positive results. Staff maintain links with young people during transition periods welcoming them back for events such as dinners or planned celebrations.

Quality of care

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

Young people say that they 'love the staff'. Relationships between the staff and young people are excellent with mutual respect and appropriate warmth and affection existing. Staff engage positively with young people affording them opportunities to discuss any situation. Young people use these positive relationships to grow in self-awareness, confidence and ability to address difficult issues. Young people confirm that they know how to complain and what supports are available in and out of the home.

Young people confirm that they attend all of their planning meetings and that staff help them to prepare for these and to contribute to them. Young people believe that staff listen to them in these situations, although they do not always get what they wish for. Staff manage the care planning process positively, engaging the young people at all stages. Staff provide excellent support to young people's engagement with their placement plans, by detailed and very regular key working sessions. Staff link key working, key-work progress sheets and placement plans, providing a sophisticated and comprehensive means of meeting the young people's personal needs. Placement plans set key objectives and goals for young people which are commented on in monthly reviews and modified as necessary. The care of the young people is enhanced by staff use of an emotional needs assessment which contains highly detailed guidance for all daily interactions with the young person. Staff use these regular interventions to ensure they provide assistance with young people's cultural, personal and religious needs.

Young people benefit from a comprehensive healthcare programme which provides for all routine needs and checks. Where young people have specific health needs staff receive additional training to ensure they can appropriately respond, keeping young people safe. Staff work closely with external professionals who praise their confidence and ability to engage in helpful discussions with young people about good health issues. Staff skills and confidence in this area mean that young people are able to discuss personal issues with them and address any health concerns they have. Local health agencies say that the staff in the home do an excellent job of

addressing difficult topics, such as discussions about sexually transmitted diseases and safe sex. The community health agency says that they can provide training to staff to enhance their skills in this area of work and give them a clear programme to implement with young people. Staff take appropriate actions to keep young people safe in line with their risk assessments and healthcare plans. Young people say that staff encourage them to engage in healthy lifestyles, through good eating patterns and physical activities. Young people are actively involved in menu planning, with advice from the home's nutritionist. Older young people cook for themselves and confirm that staff provide assistance but they plan what they eat and when.

All young people attend the home's external school, although some are on part-time programmes due to past difficulties. The school adjusts education programmes to achieve positive engagement of young people and staffing levels are high to assist this process. Social workers comment on the success in changing behaviours that this flexible approach has, reducing restraints and increasing days in school. Staff assist young people in preparing for school and in resolving any difficulties they have there. Staff help young people to prepare for next steps with the use of preparation for independence programmes linked to pathway plans and college applications. Young people have improved their attendance at school and are making gradual improvement in attainment levels.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

All staff have trained in safeguarding and are knowledgeable about how to apply these principles in their work with young people. The home has detailed policies in child protection with which staff are familiar and they apply them to keep young people safe. The managers had not shared them with the local safeguarding board as recommended in national minimum standards although the responsible individual forwarded them for comment during the inspection. Young people are comfortable with staff and say they feel safe and well looked after in the home. Relationships with staff are excellent and young people say they get on well with them all, particularly the manager. Young people say there is no bullying in the home but if they take comments, 'too far, staff intervene'. Staff record all instances of bullying, including name calling, in the bullying log and address them contemporaneously and subsequently in key working. Staff monitor these instances and adjust programmes and interventions to reduce their occurrence and maintain a positive environment for young people.

Young people put written comments on their risk assessments and placement plans, although these are often lacking in detail. The risk assessments contain helpful advice for staff to advise interactions with young people in a carefully staged way from minimal to intensive engagement. The risk assessments are supported by detailed placement plans and emotional needs assessments. Keyworkers complete these with young people, their social workers and other professionals using them to reinforce positive behaviours and reduce difficult behaviours. Staff also maintain detailed health plans for each young person which link in an easy to follow manner

to risk assessments aiding early interventions to keep young people safe from medical relapses. Young people engage with keyworkers to ensure all plans include detailed personal and cultural information, to guide interventions.

Staff manage difficult behaviour with patience and understanding, affording young people ample opportunities to discuss incidents or issues which are upsetting or angering them. The manager carefully monitors incidents, tracks progress in young people and acts appropriately to triggers or indicators. The manager adjusts programmes with young people aiding their positive engagement and reducing situations which lead to restraints or unauthorised absences. Graphical displays of young people's behaviours show significant improvements during their time in the home reducing restraints, use of sanctions and absences from the home. Staff record any physical interventions in detail, providing often excellent information they use to aid young people's development of positive behaviour. Young people engage in a post incident discussion with staff discussing positive ways of addressing similar incidents in future. Staff have not offered young people the choice of being seen by a qualified nurse or medical practitioner during this post incident debrief. During the inspection, the manager adjusted the guidance to staff to include the routine offer of medical assistance to young people.

Young people live in a home which is well resourced and subject to rigorous health and safety audits to maintain a safe environment. Fire drills are held regularly and all staff and young people are familiar with them. Not all staff have taken part in a practise of emergency procedures as recommended in the national minimum standards.

Staff recruitment records were unavailable during this inspection. The home has a good record of applying all recruitment checks required in legislation. Young people now interview applicants as an enhancement to the safer recruitment of new staff.

Leadership and management

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

Young people enjoy confidence in the manager of the home, who is in the process of registering with Ofsted. Young people say that the manager is excellent and listens to them and involves them in important decisions about the home. Staff have a high opinion of the manager and say she gives clear guidance and excellent support to aid them in their work. Young people benefit from receiving a service from well-supervised and appropriately qualified staff. Social workers comment on the good service which children receive in the home which they partly attribute to the stable staff team. Staff say they enjoy working in the home and get good support from their colleagues who provide helpful advice to maintain good quality care to young people.

The young people have access to the Statement of Purpose for the home which is clear and comprehensive but does not reflect changes in the management structure. Young people enjoy a well-structured service which is subject to regular internal and

external reviews of practice. The manager makes excellent use of monitoring information identifying trends and patterns in young people and in the operation of the home. Young people experience appropriate interventions by staff guided by the manager's analysis of this information. The manager discusses this information in staff meetings, to highlight good practice and adjust programmes or interventions where necessary.

The home generally has good relationships with neighbours but has not fully addressed the small number of concerned neighbours, in a timely manner. The external managers of the home explained the approach they are taking to address concerns but have not yet fully actioned this strategy. The manager of the home enjoys good relationships with other agencies ensuring young people receive appropriate support.

The manager ensures that young people live in a safe, well-maintained environment, through a structured monitoring of all health and safety issues. Fire drills are regular and all staff and young people are knowledgeable about emergency procedures. The manager maintains a record of all staff who have taken part in emergency drills to enhance the safety of young people. Not all staff have practised the emergency escape plan to ensure that they know what to do in an emergency.

Young people experience care from staff that receive induction in line with national minimum standards and receive appropriate training to enable them to work effectively and safely. Through the engagement with local services the home have access to training in sexual health matters which will enhance the service to young people and address a gap in the staff training programme.

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.