

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Julian Parker
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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

This is a privately owned children's home. Up to four young people of either gender from nine years to 17 years with emotional or behavioural difficulties may be looked after.

Overall effectiveness

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

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The overall effectiveness of the home is good with some outstanding areas

Young people live in a safe, caring and supportive home environment where with staff assistance they make very good progress in all aspects of their lives. Young people are making significant progress improving their self esteem, confidence and emotional resilience. Young people value their education and attend school regularly. They are kept nourished, healthy and benefit from an active lifestyle.

Young people are kept safe and feel protected from harm. They acknowledge the excellent quality of support they receive from their carers. They have formed meaningful and trusting relationships with staff helping them to feel settled in the home. Positive relationships enable positive behaviour management and constructive problem solving to resolve difficulties.

Listening to young people and child centred practice form the core strengths of the home. Young people are fully involved in the decisions affecting their lives and which influence the ongoing operation of the home. Careful care planning and staff practice is tailored to actively address the individual needs of each young person. Staff work in partnerships with young people's families and the key agencies involved in providing supportive services for the placement.

Young people are looked after by a diverse, trained competent staff team putting into practice the necessary skills, experience and tenacity to support them. Staff have an comprehensive understanding of the needs of each young person in the home providing them with the stability, consistency, stimulus and nurturing environment to develop and thrive.

The home is effectively and efficiently managed. There is a significant emphasis on the provision of high calibre child care practice. Being supported by continuous improvement and development staff practice is progressive. Excellent monitoring systems allow continuous review of the quality of care being provided enabling

desired outcomes to be improved.

Whereas the physical environment is generally well maintained and homely some high use areas such as the communal bathroom and toilets fail to maintain the overall standards that young people should expect.

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
31 (2001)	ensure that all areas of the home are kept clean reasonably decorated and maintained, particularly the communal bathing and toileting facilities.Reg31(2)(e)	30/06/2011

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people make good steady progress because they are practically and emotionally helped to develop their self esteem by progressively making small but significant achievements within all aspects of their daily lives. Developing a positive self image improves young people's emotional resilience and understanding of the reasons for their placement.

Encouragement, advice and practical help from nurturing adults helps young people understand the importance of living a healthy lifestyle and take responsibility for aspects of their own health. Having a balanced nutritious diet and supported access to local community based recreational activities encourages young people to want to exercise and improve their levels of physical fitness. Proportionate and timely guidance from community health sources informs young people of the dangers involved with substance misuse. Access to the provider's therapeutic counselling services, including life story work, supports their emotional wellbeing.

Staff are knowledgeable and aware of young people's backgrounds and family histories. This helps to shape the support being provided and assist with sensitive contact related issues. Young people benefit from appropriate contact with their families that enables them to maintain positive relations with the important people in their lives. One young person said 'This place is great compared to my last one, I can call my mom on the phone every night and she can visit at weekends. Staff are good and listen to me. There's nothing I would change.'

The educational progress made by all of the young people is very good, taking into account their starting point at the time of placement. Young people have exceptionally good attendance at the registered provider's school and other educational settings enabling them to sustain outstanding progress. Young people enjoy the way in which education is presented using academic and hands on vocational input that stimulates their capacity to achieve. One young person said of the school 'I love it'. Practical assistance from staff encourages extra curricular study by making homework a normal after school routine benefiting from the home's safe internet access for research.

Young people benefit, in their free time, from meaningful recreational opportunities and activities, including social community based events such as fitness sessions at the local gym or going on bike rides. They are actively engaged in planning meaningful leisure time outings using allocated allowances or visiting cost free places of interest for the pleasure of fresh air and exercise.

Young people develop their self help skills and a level of understanding about how to look after themselves when preparing to make the transition towards independent living while being supported by balanced levels of staff coaching. Good planning, coupled with care staff sensitivity about the emotional effects of a placement move, help to ensure that young people receive the broad based support they need. The positive impact such help has provided when moving young people on is shown by the home's continued social contact with several former residents.

Quality of care

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

The provision of consistent supervision and targeted support enable young people to thrive within the home's nurturing environment. They are provided with a wide range of support that is tailored to help each individual with their daily lives and future plans. By being a stable communicative team, staff ensure that each young person is known very well. This promotes supportive, caring relationships that are focused on feelings and needs. Young people are encouraged to freely express their wishes with listening forming a key element of the home's daily routine for staff. Dynamic child centred planning, as demonstrated by evolving and explicit placement plans, clearly identify assessed needs and take into account any pertinent issues relating to culture, race, religion and gender. Staff operate in a non-discriminatory way and understand the significance of promoting social inclusion including the need to challenge all forms of discrimination.

Drawing upon feedback from young people and staff the home's responsive management monitoring system includes an evaluation of each young person's progress over time forming an informative baseline for statutory reviews. Social workers confirm that the home is very proficient in identifying needs and communicating with the key people in the young person's life. Young people confirm that they are listened to, that their wishes and feelings are actively sought, individually and collectively, and that they believe that they can influence key aspects in the running of the home. Staff help young people to understand the reasons why it is not always possible to act on their wishes. Young people confirm they have an active voice in preparing for their reviews. With the assistance of key workers they can address specific issues that are important to them such as levels of contact or preparing for independence.

Staff understand the need to listen to and respond appropriately to complaints from young people. Young people say that they know how to make their concerns known if they had any but these are unusual because of the overall listening culture and young people's agreement with the home's norms.

The home provides young people with a healthy and stable environment from which they are able to access the services and support they need to meet their physical, emotional and psychological health needs from local community and registered provider's resources. This aspect provides a key attraction for placing authorities. With the support of staff young people make full use of community health services, further education and local leisure and recreational activities from their homely, well-furnished accommodation. Some areas of the home, for example the communal bathroom and toilet, do show signs of deterioration through heavy use which detracts from the overall well maintained condition of the building. The home's central location in an established urban community practically encourages young people to socialise and feel enabled to benefit from access all local amenities.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people are kept safe and say that they feel safe at the home. The home's clear routines and predictable staff practice within the structurally sound and secure environment support young people's feeling of being physically safe. Because the quality of care remains consistent and staff practice effectively addresses oppressive or risky behaviour the emotional wellbeing of young people is promoted. A robust management system for the recruitment and supervision of staff ensures that only appropriate and competent adults are entrusted with the care of vulnerable young people.

The safety and welfare of young people is the prime consideration of the staff and care practice supports this aim. Staff are well trained to effectively safeguard young people and are equipped with the knowledge to recognise any potential signs of abuse from whatever source. The home has protective systems in place for conducting internal investigations into allegations or suspicions of harm that are handled fairly, without delay and consistently to protect young people. Staff know how to respond and report any concerns or unsafe practice.

Key working sessions enable staff to assist young people with advice about personal safety and address any concerning behaviours they may exhibit towards their peers or others. Staff are aware of each young person's vulnerabilities within the home and wider community and develop risk assessments and behaviour management strategies to reduce any potential for harm of any kind. A successful balance of risk management, which enables young people to take reasonable risks as part of their personal development, is practiced by the home, particularly for young people accessing community facilities such as the local gym or preparing for independence.

Young people rarely go missing from this home. Those who may occasionally go absent without authority are helped to understand and address their urges to behave in this way more constructively. The local joint protocol with police informs the home's current practice when responding to young people missing from care. Young people know that staff will always take prompt and early action to ascertain their whereabouts in an effort to keep them safe. Actions that encourage young people to return as quickly as possible are initiated, such as calls or texts to their mobile phones. Young people are always treated positively upon their return with consideration and counselling being given to determine the underlying reasons for the absence. Persistent or regular patterns of absence are considered to be a safeguarding concern that initiates enhanced and often multi-agency responses to review each individual's vulnerability and safeguarding concerns.

The positive behaviours of young people are actively promoted. Young people progress with support and guidance from staff trained to encourage and reward acceptable levels of behaviour. Behaviour is generally very good because young people are aware of what the home's expectations are and the consequences of slipping below them. Young people say that they appreciate the pocket money bonuses that good behaviour attracts. Young people are encouraged to act with consideration for others within the home, school and wider community. They additionally help construct their care plan by considering how their behaviour may be best managed, including the recognition of circumstances where minimal physical

restraint may need to be exercised to keep them safe. The home is progressive in assisting young people exercise self control to moderate and reduce their behaviours that are considered undesirable. The home's stability and nurturing practice has been a significant factor in achieving these aims according to staff and social workers.

Staff working with young people in the home are carefully selected and vetted. The home has suitably robust procedures in place including a systematic approach to recruitment that ensures that the company's policy and practice is effective in practice. Young people views are sought in the staff selection process and their feedback is a significant contributor in decision making.

The environment is physically safe and appropriately secure, taking account of the needs and characteristics of the young people being cared for. Young people's welfare is promoted at all times because the home has exemplary health and safety procedures that are consistently applied by staff.

Young people live in a period house that provides a homely and physically safe environment. A comprehensive range of health and safety procedures, risk assessments and monitoring checks confirm the day to day safety of the placement and its facilities. Fire precautionary checks are carried out and drills practised with young people to ensure that they are familiar with what action to take in an emergency.

Leadership and management

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

Young people live in an effective and efficiently managed home that promotes their best interests. The home fully meets the aims and objectives set out within its Statement of Purpose. Young people, their families and social workers are clear about the services and support the home provides and how to obtain any additional information they may need to know.

The manager and staff team clearly evidence their commitment to providing the best possible child care for each young person by being focused on meeting individual practical and emotional needs within a safe nurturing environment. The staff team is very effective in its approach, making significant progress with young people across many aspects of their lives, including school attendance, educational achievement, addressing criminal activity, promoting emotional maturity, preparation for independence and helping them to keep safe.

Clear business planning confirms the manager's realistic understanding of the existing strengths of the service and those areas identified requiring further development, based on lessons from practice to date. Effective management monitoring regularly enlists the views of young people, staff and social workers and the detailed monitoring of the quality of care provided by the regulation 33 visitor. The home's practice is measured against Every Child Matters outcomes and focused upon promoting consistent and positive outcomes. The home continues to evidence its ongoing improvement when measured against previous inspections and by the significant progress being made by young people.

Staff are very well-supported by the home's registered manager. They are fully aware of their roles and responsibilities and the high expectations placed upon them for delivering consistently high quality child care practice. Staff are well motivated and demonstrate a desire to develop their practice and experience by evaluating recent changes to standards and issues relating to social work practice more generally. They confirm that support and guidance from the manager is always available and is further enhanced by regular monthly one-to-one supervision. Staff team meetings take place every month providing the opportunity to encourage the whole care team to discuss the everyday running of the home, to consider ways to improve the quality of service they offer and to reflect on young people's holistic progress.

Young people are looked after by a stable, diverse and competent group of adults presenting a broad range of age skills and experience. All staff have achieved or are working towards gaining a relevant qualification for working with young people. Staffing numbers on duty are sufficient to meet the present needs of young people confidently and often through direct one-to-one work. This includes the support young people may need for accessing recreational or leisure activities, contact visits and for attending special appointments. Staff confirm that they can access the provider's comprehensive training programme that covers general child care related issues and provides them with the skills and underpinning knowledge to practice safely.

The home's administrative records are readily available for staff to access while being

securely retained when not in use. Case records establish a comprehensive picture of each individual young person's needs, their development and progress. Young people's records contain up-to-date information about them, including requested relevant documents from placing authorities.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.