

## Inspection report for children's home

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| <b>Unique reference number</b> | SC063683          |
| <b>Inspection date</b>         | 27/06/2012        |
| <b>Inspector</b>               | Alicea Churchward |
| <b>Type of inspection</b>      | Full              |
| <b>Provision subtype</b>       | Children's home   |

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| <b>Date of last inspection</b> | 14/02/2012 |
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## Service information

### Brief description of the service

This is a local authority home that provides care and accommodation for six children with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

### 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**.

Young people make good progress in relation to their starting points across all aspects of their welfare and development: physical, social, emotional and behavioural. This is underpinned by effective, high quality support from staff.

Care planning and practice are highly personalised to meet the individual needs of each young person. Staff in the home demonstrate a good understanding of safe working practice. Young people confirm that unsafe situations and behaviour are well managed by staff, and boundaries and expectations about group living are consistently followed.

Management arrangements are strong, and the manager is effective at tackling weaknesses and securing improvement in most issues. The overall judgement since the time of the last inspection for this home has changed from satisfactory to good with some outstanding features in outcomes for young people and the quality of care.

As a result of this visit requirements and recommendations have been set in respect of a number of issues, including the provision of regular, good quality training for all staff particularly in matters such as physical restraint and first aid. Other shortfalls relate to inadequacies in the monitoring of missing from home reports and a failure to make notifications to Ofsted. At the moment these matters are not impacting negatively on the care provided to the young people because care is consistently delivered by a staff team who are experienced.

Feedback from independent reviewing officers and placing social workers includes

'staff work really hard, they are really supportive and absolutely the best place for X (young person) who has done brilliantly. Firm boundaries are set and staff have a fantastic approach'; 'The management of the home is really good. A relaxed attitude and staff work really well in partnership. Brilliant, excellent, I have no concerns'.

And young people say 'I like staff, I have good relationship'; 'the other young people are very kind'; 'it's a very relaxing environment and very homely like'; 'it's chilled, it's good'; 'it's a nice home, safe but I am ready to leave'. These statements throughout the inspection show that young people value living in the home and that it is a good place to live.

## 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 all staff are trained in the use of physical restraint techniques and that training is regularly refreshed (NMS 3.15)
- ensure that visits of the home carried out under Regulation 33 include relevant checks set out in regulations and guidance and checks of any records of missing person's reports (NMS 21.7)
- ensure that the system in place to notify within 24 hours the persons and appropriate authorities of the occurrence of significant events in accordance with Regulation 30 is followed in practice- this is particularly in respect of making notifications to HMCI (NMS 24.1)
- ensure that staff have received sufficient refresher training in first aid. (NMS 6.7)

### Outcomes for children and young people

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

Through regular keywork sessions, activities and education, staff support young people to develop a positive self view, emotional resilience and to have confidence in their own abilities. Their ability to form and sustain attachments is evident and young people talk positively about the staff in the home. Staff present as good role models to the young people.

Young people's health needs including their physical, emotional, and psychological health are promoted very well. The manager and staff in the home successfully engage young people to attend all medical appointments. Monitoring of young people's health needs is robust and as a result all medical appointments and immunisations for are up to date.

Meals are well presented, nutritious and well balanced. Young people are encouraged

to lead healthy lifestyles. There is good use of external services to help young people reduce behaviours that are harmful to their health, such as, smoking and substance abuse are reduced. Young people understand the importance of healthy lifestyles and take responsibility for their own health by responding to some of the advice they receive.

The focus upon educational attendance and attainment is a strong feature in this home, and attendance is an expectation of the daily routine. Young people have exceptionally good attendance at school, college or other educational provision. Their educational achievement and progress is exceptional, taking into account their starting point at the time of placement. This is a credit to the manager, staff and young people. The home has excellent links with education providers and co-ordinators to ensure the best possible outcomes for young people in their care.

Young people are encouraged to make a positive contribution to their home through the regular and open discussions that take place. Staff consult with them on all routine and care planning matters. This ensures that young people's wishes and feelings are valued and taken into account in the overall operation of the home. An independent reviewing officer reports, that staff assist young people in preparing for their reviews, 'they always have a report and are very well informed.'

All young people benefit from having appropriate contact with family, friends and other people who are important to them. Contact arrangements are regularly reviewed as part of placement plans and revised where necessary.

The home provides effective preparation for a successful transition to independence and adult life. Young people have an 'independence passport.' This document charts the progress being made in all areas. This helps to equip young people well with the skills they will need in their transition to adulthood. One young person said 'this has been a really good place to live, the staff are brilliant but I am ready to move on.' This demonstrates that young people feel confident and ready to leave the home.

## Quality of care

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

Young people benefit from strong, warm respectful relationships with staff who provide a very supportive environment for young people. Staff speak positively about the young people in their care and are committed to providing them with good opportunities and experiences. Young people are encouraged to behave appropriately. They are clear about behavioural boundaries and respond to these, becoming more able to manage their own behaviour over the duration of their placement.

Young people know how to make a complaint and have used the home's procedures. One independent reviewing officer said 'young people's concerns were handled very well by the manager the outcome for the young person was really good.' Young people are informed, through the children's guide and other associated materials,

how they can access support independently. They also have access to the children's rights officer who regularly visits the home.

Young people benefit from the excellent delivery of highly personalised care planning and staff understand the individual needs of young people very well. Residential care plans give very good quality information about individual needs and progress. Young people are consulted about their care and residential placement plans on a regular basis.

The home provides young people with opportunities to engage in leisure and recreational time. These increase their engagement in the local community, and improve their sense of identity and self-esteem. Staff encourage young people to participate in a variety of activities that are provided by the home and also encourage them to maintain their own interests and hobbies. Staff introduce young people to new experiences, such as going abroad, as a means of increasing their confidence in social situations and equipping them with skills in readiness for adulthood. Many of the young people are of an age where their interests are outside of the home with their friends.

Young people live in a suitably designed house which is well maintained, clean and well equipped. There are communal and private areas and young people have their own rooms that are personalised to their individual tastes. There is good access to local shops transport and amenities. Young people also have access to a private area in which they may make and receive telephone calls in private.

### **Safeguarding children and young people**

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

Young people confirm that this is a safe place to live and can identify adults who they can speak to about any worries or concerns. Young people report that there is no bullying.

Staff protect young people from neglect, abuse and exploitation through the implementation of robust individual risk assessments. They are alert to the possibility of associated behaviours and staff talk to young people to help them understand about how to keep themselves safe. Staff are clear about their responsibilities and demonstrate a good understanding of safe care practice, including the whistleblowing and safeguarding young people procedures. Feedback from one social worker was, 'I have absolutely no safeguarding concerns whatsoever'.

There have been a number of times where young people have been missing for periods of time which vary between a short duration and overnight. Steps are taken, in accordance with procedures, to ensure their safety. Staff work to clear protocols with the local police and have a dedicated police officer to liaise with on such matters. Staff try to understand the triggers for this behaviour, attend the regular multi-agency meetings that are convened and work to the agreed strategies. Although the number of incidents have reduced significantly, some concerns remain.

These are being managed well

Positive behaviour is promoted and regularly reinforced. The use of physical restraint is low and any intervention is brief. The home maintains accurate and clear recordings of any use of physical restraint and the reasons for its use. The authority are in the process of revising the current recording arrangements to further enhance the quality of these records. Some of the staff in the home have not undertaken training in restraint and other staff have not had their training refreshed in a timely way. This is not a concern currently due the effectiveness of the behaviour management strategies.

No new staff have been appointed to the home since the time of the last inspection. Staff and volunteers are carefully selected, vetted and monitored to prevent unsuitable people from being recruited and having the opportunity to harm children or place them at risk. The manager has identified some shortfalls in the checks that were completed for longstanding staff members of staff. This is largely because their employment pre-dates the current regulations. Remedial action has been taken to address this and this is indicative of the service's commitment to safeguarding the welfare of young people.

Investigations into allegations or suspicion of harm are handled fairly and as quickly as processes will allow. They are handled consistently and in a way that provides effective protection and support for the child concerned, the person making the allegation and the person who is the subject of the allegation. Staff are alert to any suspicions of poor practice and use reporting procedures to good effect in order safeguard the welfare of young people.

The home is physically safe and appropriately secure, there are regular maintenance checks, fire drills and risk assessment in place to ensure the safety of young people, staff and visitors to the home.

## **Leadership and management**

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

At the time of the last inspection one requirement was made in relation to the monitoring of the home by the responsible individual and a recommendation made concerning information in the children's guide. These matters have been addressed.

The frequency of visits to the home, by the responsible individual, to form an opinion of the quality of care have increased, the views of young people are sought and the manager now has a copy of all reports of these visits. However a minor shortfall remains in the monitoring of missing person's reports; this is not currently impacting upon the young people as the home maintains good reports about all absences. The format for reports completed following visits in line with Regulation 33 are being revised to include this for the future monitoring purposes. Contact details of the Children's Rights Director have been included in the children's guide and the young people now have access to additional independent advocacy should they require it.

Many of the young people have lived at the home for long periods of time and are settled. The home has a dedicated Registered Manager who provides strong leadership to her team. Staff speak very positively about the manager. They say the support is 'amazing, ten out of ten, there is always an open door.' The home can demonstrate capacity for continuing improvement, based on its track record, performance since its previous inspection, and evidence of the impact of improvements.

Staff report less favourably about training provided by the authority since the time of the last inspection. There is now a training plan in place but it is not clear when training is being held and staff are not receiving regular updated training in areas such as restraint and first aid. These are required as lack of suitable training could impact negatively on the safety and well being of young people. Pro-actively the manager is using part of the staff meetings as a learning and development opportunity to increase the knowledge base of the staff team and refresh areas such as safeguarding. In addition there are planned team days to discuss further development.

The manager regularly monitors, in line with regulations, all records kept by the home to ensure compliance with the home's policies, to identify any concerns about specific incidents and to identify patterns and trends. Immediate action is taken to address any issues raised by this monitoring. The manager conducts robust internal monitoring of the homes quality of care this includes feedback from the young people and other stakeholders. This informs the development plan for the home to further improve the service.

All significant events relating to the protection of children accommodated in the home are notified by the registered person to the appropriate authorities, but on two occasions have not been notified to Ofsted. It is clear in discussions and in the records that appropriate action was taken following these incidents.

All young people's records are clear, up to date and stored securely. They contribute to an understanding of individual young people's life, experiences and plans for the future.

## 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.