

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Sue Winson
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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 children's home is a detached house in a residential area which is close to public transport links and community facilities. There are three bedrooms upstairs and one of these is used as a staff sleep-in room. Downstairs there is a lounge, kitchen, office/sleep-in room and a conservatory. It provides care and accommodation for up to two young people who are placed by their local authority.

Overall effectiveness

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

All aspects of care planning are highly personalised to meet individual needs of each young person which ensures they make positive progress. They receive excellent support to meet their needs which are clearly outlined in placement plans which are reviewed and monitored regularly. Good communication and working relationships between the staff, social workers, parents and others benefit the young people. The staff focus on the welfare and safety of young people and work with them to raise their awareness of personal safety issues. Young people say they are, and feel, safe in the home and know that staff worry about them and their safety.

They are regularly consulted and encouraged to have a voice which ensures that their needs and views are central to all aspects of how the home operates and develops practice. House meetings and individual sessions are routinely used to gain their opinions. At the inspection the young people made positive comments about their quality of care and the staff.

The home is effectively and efficiently managed and exceptionally well monitored and the whole staff group are involved in the improvement agenda. One recommendation is raised at this inspection regarding links with placing authorities.

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 staff work with placing local authorities to promote children's education. (NMS 8)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people make positive progress in the home as a result of individualised support which helps them to gain a positive self view and build on their skills to increase confidence. Their views are routinely sought, in meetings and as part of everyday life and they are encouraged and empowered to voice their wishes and opinions, and do so readily.

There is an excellent approach to promoting the physical and emotional well-being of the young people. The staff work in conjunction with the local looked after children nurse and other agencies and professionals to the benefit of the young people. The company contracts with a therapy service to provide training and advice for staff, which includes consultation on direct working to promote positive self-identity and self-worth. The managers and staff value this input which impacts positively on the young people. Smoking cessation is actively encouraged and young people are engaging well.

The education of young people is well promoted and they are supported to achieve their educational potential. The home is active in identifying appropriate educational placements and staff are knowledgeable about resources in the area. Where young people are not yet in education, there is a clear expectation that they will engage in educational activities, both in house, and through visiting museums and places of interest during usual school hours. During the inspection young people were interviewing staff about their countries of origin then researching information about different cultures and religions on the internet. This prepares them well for the routine of the school day, however, in the interim period, there is no oversight from educationalists to ensure young people have appropriate resources, in line with their education plans. Young people make constructive use of leisure time. They enjoy a range of leisure activities, including some which help them keep fit, and choose to save for more expensive days out. They expressed a high degree of satisfaction with the opportunities they have.

As preparation for independent living young people are routinely encouraged and assisted to develop life skills, including shopping, cooking and general household tasks. This is embedded in their care plans, whether or not they are at the age where formal pathway planning starts, and is part of the reward system. Young people enjoy cooking for each other and the staff. The home is in a residential area and young people have personalised their bedrooms and have choice in the décor of communal areas. The house is well maintained and systems are in place for repairs to be done in a timely way.

Young people are supported and encouraged to maintain contact with family and friends and they are satisfied with the arrangements. Staff maintain positive relationships with parents and consult with them, and the young people, to make contact visits as positive as possible. For example, young people and their parents go out to spend clothing allowances together. There is a strong commitment to supporting contact, sometimes over large distances, for the benefit of the young people. The service received very positive comments from parents in a recent questionnaire.

Quality of care

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

Young people enjoy positive and constructive relationships with staff and respect is actively promoted. Comprehensive and highly detailed placement plans clearly identify their individual needs and how they will be met. These are continuously monitored and reviewed monthly in conjunction with the young people, who are encouraged to contribute or add their comments to their plans. Staff are active in pursuing information from placing local authorities to inform the plans. The staff have high aspirations for all the young people and their enthusiasm is conveyed to the young people who engage in individual work to achieve positive outcomes.

Positive behaviour management is a well established practice in the home. Young people are supported to take responsibility for their own behaviour and like the reward system which identifies a small number of achievable goals. Praise, encouragement and assistance by staff ensures that young people make progress in every aspect of their lives. A therapist who visits the home commented that the home offers, 'consistent, reliable and predictable care to the young people'.

Young people feel that their views, wishes and feelings are actively sought and listened to. Where it is not possible to act on their wishes, staff explain the reasons to them. The home has a history of consistently promoting young people's rights and they regularly influence decisions in relation to daily life, for example, goal setting for reward systems, menu and activity planning. Young people said that, 'if we ask for something in the right manner there is a high possibility we might get it' and that if not a reason is given. Complaints information is readily available to the young people and they know they have a right to complain to a variety of people.

Young people are welcomed into the home and whenever possible, are supported when moving on. The social worker for a young person who recently left the home to move to live with his family, wrote a letter thanking the home for 'providing quality care and support' and said she was appreciative of the outreach support the staff agreed to provide.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

The home has a strong focus on safeguarding young people and this is at the centre of all their practice. Staff work with young people, in association with other agencies and professionals, to inform them about personal safety issues and high levels of supervision ensure that young people are well protected. All significant events relating to the protection of the young people are notified to the relevant authorities and appropriate action is taken.

Extensive and effective risk assessments and risk management plans ensure that young people are protected as far as is possible. They are regularly reviewed and updated in conjunction with the young people. These provide effective guidance to ensure that practice is consistent across the staff team and to provide clear messages to the young people. Bullying is not tolerated and young people understand the nature of bullying and that it is unacceptable. The home has been successful in reducing the incidents of absence without authority, where young people have arrived with a history of putting themselves at risk. Regular and effective health and safety checks ensure that the home provides a physically safe environment. The company has a history of robust staff recruitment and supervision of visitors to protect young people.

Young people respond well to the clear boundaries and consistency of care that the staff provide. There have been no sanctions or restraints since the last inspection due to the staff commitment to positive behaviour management based on good relationships with the young people and knowledge of their preferences. Young people said that 'rules are fair and reasonable' and that there are no restraints or sanctions.

Leadership and management

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

The home is effectively and efficiently managed and the manager communicates high expectations to the staff. There is a clear improvement agenda in the home and across the company which benefits young people. Open management allows staff to put forward ideas and suggestions to improve outcomes for young people, and practice in the home. Robust monitoring, including monthly visits under Regulation 33, ensures that the aims and objectives of the Statement of Purpose are consistently met. Questionnaires and consultations with young people, social workers, parents and others involved in the lives of the young people, provide further feedback and inform their development plans. The home has a history of acting on recommendations from inspections, and actions identified in the comprehensive Regulation 33 reports, in a timely manner.

The Statement of Purpose and young people's guide accurately represent the services the home provides. Young people also have information about a range of local services, including those they can access themselves.

Young people receive high quality care from a stable, committed, experienced and skilled staff group who are well supervised and supported to meet their needs. They are imaginative and innovative in engaging young people to work with them. Good communication and regular handovers and staff meetings ensure continuity of care. There are sufficient staff and any vacancies are managed by the use of a small number of company bank staff, known to the young people. They work together well to provide consistency of care which benefits the young people. They have opportunities to increase their skills and gain qualifications through the company's well developed training department, and access specific courses to meet the needs of individual young people.

Equality and diversity practice is **outstanding**.