

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Robert Curr / Paul Scott
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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 children's home registered to provide care and education for up to two children between 10 and 17 years old. The home is situated close to shops and local amenities. The home is in a residential area with little to distinguish the house from any other nearby property.

Overall effectiveness

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

The service provides a good standard of care, which takes account of the diversity of the young people living there. All young people are engaged in education programmes which the support staff encourage them to attend. Consistent support is provided to young people in preparing them to move to other placements or returning home, which aids positive outcomes for them. The staff team as a whole involve young people in planning for their futures and support workers help young people to contribute to their care planning.

Young people feel safe in the home and enjoy positive relationships with the staff team. Young people commented that there is never any use of physical intervention and that sanctions are fair. Young people say that staff listen to them and that their views about the home are often accepted.

The home is safe and well maintained with good resources for the young people living there. Young people particularly like their bedrooms and feel safe in them.

The management team are aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the service and monitor its effectiveness in meeting its aims and objectives.

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 the behaviour management policy is implemented, in particular provide staff with specific strategies to reduce incidences of negative behaviours (Children's Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations, Volume 5 paragraph 2.88 & 2.89)

- ensure all existing care staff have attained a minimum level 3 qualification. (NMS 18.5)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

The staff team provide a positive supportive environment where young people are encouraged to achieve their full potential. Young people are generally making good progress in attendance and achievement in their education. During the inspection one young person received praise from staff for the school work and college preparation she was undertaking.

Young people are appreciative of the assistance they receive in preparing for adulthood learning budgetary skills, cooking, personal hygiene and shopping. Members of staff work alongside young people in these tasks encouraging them to achieve to a good standard. Young people confirm that staff treat them as individuals and allow them to make choices about personal items, clothing and the décor and layout of their bedroom.

Young people are encouraged to keep in contact with family and friends, where appropriate and particular staff maintain close contact with parents of young people in the home. All young people in the home are being supported in maintaining positive outside contacts. Young people are receiving regular individual sessions with support staff where they explore their background and gain support with important issues for them. The staff team as a whole seek to aid the young people to be rehabilitated with their family, move on to alternative carers or be prepared for independence and adulthood. Two young people are being supported by the staff in this transition process. This is helping them to be well prepared to move on successfully.

All staff are working closely with internal and external agencies to ensure that they meet young people's physical and mental health needs. All young people are registered with a local general practitioner and support workers encourage them to have regular medical, optical and dental checkups. Staff also track health improvements in young people, recording success in addressing any presenting problems. This is helping them to take responsibility for their own health care.

Quality of care

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

Young people living in this home benefit from an experienced staff group who demonstrate their commitment to addressing their welfare issues. Relationships between young people and staff in the home are genuinely warm and friendly, and show mutual respect. Members of staff discuss difficult issues with young people and challenge inappropriate behaviours sensitively but firmly. The staff record positives about young people to avoid any over focus on negative behaviours. This initiative aids to tracking progress in young people. Young people confirmed that staff explain the rules to them and provide them with written guidance on this. They also state that there is no bullying in the home although staff ensure that any behaviours that could intimidate people are instantly dealt with, if it happens.

The staff team encourage young people with their educational and school attendance, assisting in settling them at school and in getting there. They seek assistance from social workers in filling gaps in information and in planning for the young people's future. Young people confirm that they are supported by staff and that they help them to be involved in project work outside of school. They confirm that support workers attempt to involve them in planning meetings and represent their views if they choose not to attend meetings.

Young people say that they receive good and helpful advice on sexual health, and drug and alcohol abuse to aid in keeping them safe. The staff group respond sensitively to the young people's presenting problems and address them as agreed with health care professionals and internal therapeutic staff. Young people have risk assessments on their files that are regularly reviewed and involve each young person. These assessments aid the staff team, in addressing individual needs and support young people in actively choosing to keep themselves healthy and avoid negative influences. This makes young people feel cared for. Care staff are aided in providing good quality health care by external professionals in physical and mental health. These professionals provide advice directly to young people and indirectly by advice supplied to the staff team, to aid positive outcomes for the young people.

Young people say that staff actively listen to them and confirm that staff act upon their views. They clearly state that they know how to make a complaint but prefer to talk to staff directly rather than use the formal system. The staff team have developed a way of catching low-level complaints and grumbles by including them in the wider team meetings that include young people to aid positive outcomes for young people. Young people are able to outline ideas they have for the improvement of the home recognising any budgetary constraints and reasons why these may not be possible.

Staff encourage young people to pursue personal interests and activities that they enjoy. Young people are very positive about the activities and outings they enjoy and feel this has opened new horizons for them in comparison to previous experiences.

Young people make suggestions about the menu or cook their own meals with or without staff assistance. Support workers consult young people about their care plans and encourage them to contribute to all planning meetings about them. Members of staff respect young people's diversity and aid them in meeting their

personal needs. For example, allowing young people choice in how they dress, diet and following their preferred lifestyles where appropriate. In addition, the staff team do not allow young people to disrespect others because of any real or perceived differences. Young people confirm that support staff respect and support them with their cultural and religious beliefs.

To aid young people make a successful transition from the home, independence plans are phased. The plans are comprehensive and support them to increase their independence outside of the home and engage in skills and activities which are important for the future. Support staff create individual sessions with each young person aiding them in engaging successfully in their transition activities. Help is provided with budgeting, maintaining work, college or access to appropriate supports. This includes helping young people to reintegrate into their family or to fit into a new home or foster placement.

The staff team, along with young people, ensure that the house is clean and tidy. There is a games room that is equipped with a number of games and activities. There is a computer to pursue leisure interests or undertake school work. Medicines are securely stored and appropriately dispensed for the safety and well-being of the young people. There is ample space within the building for young people to meet visitors in private and the staff ensure that this occurs. The young people choose how to decorate their bedroom and can personalise them as they choose.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

All young people say that they feel safe in the home and that it is much better than other places they have lived. They relate well to staff within the home and are confident that if they have any problems they can talk to a member of staff about things. Young people can lock their rooms and confirm that support staff respect their privacy.

The home has no instances of physical restraint although all support staff receive training in physical intervention recognising only approved holds and interventions. The training gives a focus on conflict resolution without use of physical intervention. One young person said, 'staff never use restraint they usually just talk'.

Placement plans highlight the general management of young people's behaviour but give little strategic guidance for staff in relation to managing specific behaviours. This is not in line with the organisation's behaviour management policy. However, good arrangements exist for monitoring the progress young people are making in relation to unacceptable behaviour. Regulation 33 visitors and the Registered Manager, in her regulation 34 report, monitor the use of behaviour management. Through this process, managers also seek to keep children safe and identify training needs.

Instances of going missing are relatively few and young people will frequently keep in touch with staff when they have returned late or stayed out without permission. All young people have a risk assessment on file, which addresses the risk of them going missing and the risk level they are at when missing. The staff are aware of events, which may lead to a young person going missing and take steps to address this. There is a good link with local police but as yet there is no agreed protocol to follow when young people go missing. Support staff describe how they attempt to maintain contact with young people to check their safety and to advise them to return to avoid further risk. Staff can clearly describe how they take a positive approach to young people returning and do not sanction them for going missing.

All staff employed undergo rigorous checks to ensure they are suitable to work with young people.

Staff are aware of what actions to take to safeguard young people. They are well-informed on their safeguarding responsibilities and employ procedures, where required, to safeguard young people. The training programme places an emphasis on responsibilities under the local child protection procedures and is an integral part of individual learning and development plans for staff.

There are clear risk assessments on children's files identifying risks they present to themselves or others and risks to them within the community. These risk assessments are subject to review with advice from placing professionals, therapeutic staff and incorporate the views of young people.

There are good health and safety procedures in place. All relevant checks are up to date and the organisation has a system for alerting them to the need to renew these. Clear and accurate fire safety records are held. Monthly fire drills take place and checks on fire fighting equipment are up to date. This upholds the health and safety

of the young people and staff residing at the home.

The home's Statement of Purpose stresses the commitment to helping young people to achieve their potential in a safe environment, which protects them from physical danger, and one that is free from any prejudices. Young people live in a safe environment because good attention is paid to safety and equipment checks to maintain a healthy environment. Frequent fire drills ensure young people can safely exit the home and they understand the importance of this.

Leadership and management

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

The Registered Manager has ensured that the home has addressed the five recommendations made at the last inspection. All staff are trained in first aid and safe medication practices. All staff have updated training in relation to behaviour management. All young people have an up-to-date personal education plan in place and the Statement of Purpose has been reviewed.

Young people are looked after by an experienced and well-trained staff team. The staff team express confidence in their management team. The staff team reflects the young people's backgrounds and the balance in terms of race and gender and this helps in meeting the needs of the young people. Staff continue to develop their knowledge to ensure that they meet young people's needs. Members of staff have personal development programmes, which allow them to build on core training, monitor their achievements and encourage personal development to enhance the service for young people. Each shift has sufficient staff to care for the number of young people and handovers are thorough ensuring that all relevant information is available to incoming staff. The staff also provides regular updates for education staff and social workers to enable them to respond appropriately to the young people.

The staff are in varying stages of achieving a qualification at National Vocational Qualification at level 3 in caring for children and young people. Currently the overall qualification recommendation is not met but appears to be on target. All members of staff within the home receive regular training including refresher training in managing challenging behaviour. The manager maintains a matrix of training undertaken by staff and endeavour to meet personal training requests. Supervision is regular and all staff are happy with the quality and frequency offered. Support staff interviewed stated that supervision is excellent and aids them in performing their role and helps retain a focus on equalities and care of young people. There are two weekly staff meetings, which provide a good forum for discussion of young people, transfer of new information and input from other agencies and trainers. The Registered Manager uses this forum positively to update staff on new legislation and practice developments.

Young people's files are up to date and securely stored in the main office of the home. Young people confirm that support workers consult them about their care and that they contribute to the record held about them. Staff maintain files to a good standard and have recently changed some recording systems to aid them to track outcomes for young people.

Young people confirm that they know what the function of the home is and what it is trying to achieve with them. The home has a Statement of Purpose, which the Registered Manager has reviewed, to reflect the changes within the service and changes in the focus on positive outcomes for young people. The Statement of Purpose is comprehensive and reflects the experience for young people within the home, having a strong emphasis on promoting independence and individuality in young people striving to help them achieve their full potential. The young people confirm that the home does seek to aid them in achieving their full potential and being prepared for life after this experience.

The home has monthly regulation 33 inspections, which the Registered Manager responds to, to improve the quality of care and safety provided to young people. The Registered Manager undertakes regulation 34 audits of the home and is using these as part of his quality assurance for the improvement of the home. Young people's views have previously been sought to advise this process and the Registered Manager states that she will continue to incorporate their views into the development plan.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.