

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Susan Mullin
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home is a local authority children's home that provides short-term residential accommodation for five children who have emotional or behavioural difficulties. Young people's stay is normally no longer than 12 weeks. During this time support will be provided to either return the young person home or to assist them moving to an appropriate long term care placement.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: a service that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

Good: a service 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**.

Outcomes for young people are good. They benefit from thorough individual assessments and comprehensive behaviour management plans. Young people are provided with opportunities to engage in a variety of activities and social events, which increases their self esteem and confidence.

Young people say that they feel safe in the home and know that staff are concerned about their welfare. The home continues to provide personalised, well-planned care to all the young people in the home. Young people report that they have input into the daily running of the home and into their own individualised care plans.

Equality and diversity is intrinsic in everyday practice and feedback from professionals and young people is positive. The home is well managed by a pro-active manager and good relationships have developed between staff and young people, with mutual respect evident. The staff group are very knowledgeable about the young people in their care. The manager and his senior staff demonstrated that they understood the strengths and weaknesses of the home by taking action to secure improvement. One recommendation made at the last inspection, with regard to the manager signing all safeguarding records has been met.

Young people are supported in fulltime education or alternative placements through an educational contract provision. There is ongoing monitoring of the progress that young people make.

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people make good progress in developing a positive self-view and knowledge and understanding of their background. Staff are enthusiastic and encourage young people in promoting links with the wider community and build upon forming and sustaining relationships with others. Individual activities form part of evening and weekend routines, as well as group activities and young people are supported to achieve their personal goals.

Most young people are achieving good educational outcomes based on their starting point. Where young people are not currently in full time education, there are alternative arrangements to address shortfalls. For example, enrolment in an outward bounds educational centre. The manager and staff work proactively with the education departments in seeking appropriate educational placements. There are weekly visits from the Looked After Education co-ordinator who monitors young people's progress and supports seeking alternative placements when necessary.

Young people have detailed health plans, which ensure that their individual health needs are assessed and met. Young people attend regular health appointments and confirmed that they have been consulted in all aspects of their care.

The home's ethos and purpose is to help return young people to home or on to a long term residential placement. However, where appropriate, the staff in the home undertake effective preparation for a successful transition into independence and adulthood. Young people benefit from contact with their family, friends, and other people who are important to them. Staff support this contact though partnership working with the placing authorities. Where contact is restricted, young people understand why this is the case and staff encourage them to express their thoughts during key work sessions. A young person stated, 'Staff take me to see my mum and they stay around to support me and bring me back in the car'.

Quality of care

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

Young people enjoy good relationships with staff, which enables them to engage positively and confidently and feel supported. Staff are skilled in their knowledge and understanding of the diverse needs of individuals and young people benefit from a motivated and enthusiastic staff team. Young people have developed appropriate relationships with each other and this contributes to the homely feel of the setting. A young person stated, 'the staff are really good especially my key worker. I am treated with respect and staff are always polite and helpful.'

A visiting professional stated, 'The home welcomes students in placement, the learning they give the students is immense. I am really happy with the staff, they are committed, enthusiastic and passionate about positive outcomes for young people.'

Young people are confident in participating in their meetings and confirmed that issues raised are addressed and that staff listen to them. Staff seek young people's views about the running of the home including menu and activity planning. As a result, young people feel they are involved in the day-to-day running of the home.

The home promotes a complaints procedure, which the young people state they are aware of and understand how to use. The young person's guide to the home details information on children's rights and advocacy services. Complaints are taken seriously and dealt with promptly. This results in young people developing emotional resilience and feelings of self-worth.

Young people have detailed placement plans and behaviour strategies in place that staff review on a regular basis. As a result, young people with complex care needs receive a cohesive care package. Staff work hard at engaging young people to ensure they receive the right support and guidance, which promotes improved outcomes for young people.

The home has clear policies and procedures on promoting a healthy life style. Young people benefit from good links between the home and health professionals that ensure a holistic approach to their care. As a result, young people are provided with effective guidance and support when they most need it. A young person stated, 'Since I have been here in the home I have reduced my habit, the staff in the home have been great helping me with this. I feel better as a result.'

Young people understand the importance of regular exercise and a healthy diet and contribute to weekly food menus. Menus demonstrate the promotion of meals from other countries. Young people are involved in the budgeting, shopping and cooking of their meals, based on individual need, which subsequently supports the development of independence. A young person stated, 'the best thing about the home is the food. It is very good here they make a really good fish pie. I also had pan fried sea bass with a sauce, which was really good. I cook a lot, I love cooking, last Saturday I made a paella for the other young people and the staff, they said they really enjoyed it.'

Attendance and improved attainment in education is actively encouraged and supported. The management and staff have established a culture within the home that promotes and values education attendance and attainment, recognising the difficulties the young people have experienced in sustaining education placements prior to their admission.

Young people are provided with a range of activities that enhance learning opportunities and develop independence skills and self-confidence. Staff provide individual plans for young people that reflect their interests and supports their aspirations. The home also encourages group activities for young people, which subsequently supports them in building sustainable relationships with others.

Equality and diversity are established within the culture and ethos of the home and

staff have all received training in this regard. As a result, young people feel respected and confident. Staff recognise individual needs and consequently internal placement plans and key work sessions reflect the personal identity and cultural background of young people.

The home is decorated and furnished to a high standard and is a bright and homely environment. Bedrooms area all en-suite and reflect the personal tastes of the young people and those spoken to confirmed that their privacy and dignity is respected.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Systems are in place to promote the safety and well-being of young people. Staff are provided with information about safeguarding during their period of induction and further training is provided as part of mandatory training. This ensures that they have current knowledge to promote the safety and well-being of young people.

Staff provide good individualised care and support young people to behave in a socially acceptable manner. This means that young people are highly valued and consistently involved in their own behaviour plans and measures of controls. This enables young people to develop an understanding and take responsibility for improvements in their behaviour. When incidents have occurred, these are accurately recorded and signed by the young person. The home has clear practices and procedures regarding what to do if a young person is missing from the home. Individual risk assessments also underpin the procedures to follow and these are known and understood by staff. A compliment from a parent stated, 'The staff have helped empower me to redress the power balance and reinstate my authority in supporting my child, to manage his behaviour and work through his problems'.

Young people feel protected from harm and bullying. One young person stated, 'I was verbally bullied and pushed about physically and staff listened to what I had to say and really helped me with this and intervened constantly and the teasing stopped.' The promotion of equality and diversity is threaded through all areas of practice at this home and is second nature to the staff team, who have day-to-day contact with the young people. Each person is appreciated, valued and recognised for who they are as individuals.

Health and safety audits are carried out regularly and the home has an up-to-date fire safety risk assessment. Fire safety measures are in place including regular equipment checks and fire drills are undertaken by all staff and young people. Appropriate arrangements are also in place to ensure that staff recruited to work with young people are suitable and safe. These measures ensure that the safety and well-being of young people is promoted.

Leadership and management

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

Young people benefit from a well-managed home where they receive a good level of care. The manager takes into account young people's individuality, personal attributes and difficulties. The staff team is diverse in their attributes and sufficient in number on individual shifts to meet the assessed needs of young people in placement. They are also well respected and liked by the young people. The staff team feel the current arrangements offer all the support and guidance they need and describe the management as being supportive and approachable.

Staff receive good training opportunities which are provided on an ongoing rolling programme and all mandatory training is up to date. The team are well supported by the manager and senior staff through the supervision process, which ensures all staff are fully trained and competent to meet the needs of the young people in their care. When asked what the staff thought had improved since the last full inspection in September 2011, the staff stated, 'We are being better managed as the manager is back in place full time. We also have a full complement of staff and staff morale has improved.'

The home's Statement of Purpose has been updated to reflect the current operation of the service. A young person's guide is given to young people when they move in, which provides them with useful information about the day-to-day operation of the home. The aims and objectives set out what the home aims to achieve for each child placed and the ethos promotes equality and diversity for all looked after children. Complaints that have arisen from the last inspection have been addressed in line with the homes policies and procedures.

The home is monitored through management checks and checks by an external representative of the provider. Monitoring visits occur monthly as required under the regulations and there are systems in place to identify and address any shortfalls. This enables the management to be reflective of practice and continually evaluate the service provided. Young people's case files include all the required information and are stored securely to protect privacy.

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.