

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. The young people usually stay for 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 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 benefit from well-planned care implemented by committed and competent staff. Staff take into account the unique needs of each young person and value their individual characteristics. This holistic approach has been of significant benefit to young people after short periods at the home. Staff provide a warm, relaxed and homely atmosphere. Consequently, young people are receptive to the care provided and give positive feedback about this. They value the relationships with staff and benefit from the stability of the experienced, established staff team.

Young people's safety is a priority. The staff understand and respond to incidents and issues as they emerge, de-escalating behaviour and working with young people to reflect on how situations may be managed differently in the future.

The management team have a comprehensive understanding of areas for development and strive hard to improve these and the outcomes for young people placed at the service.

One requirement is made as a result of the inspection, to review the children's guide to the home. This does not detract from the overall good quality of care or the highly efficient management of the home.

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
4 (2001)	keep under review and where appropriate revise the children's guide. (Regulation 5 (a))	13/06/2013

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people may be placed in the home at short notice as emergency placements. This can be very distressing for them. However, they confirm that they are made to feel welcome by the staff, who help them to adapt to their new surroundings. Young people report that staff are respectful to them and available at any time if they need to talk to them about any concerns that they may have. This provides a strong foundation from which staff can offer young people guidance regarding personal health, family relationships and safety.

Staff clearly identify, support and address young people's health issues. Individual needs are included in placement plans that are updated when health needs have been met, or when new issues are identified. This helps the staff team monitor young people's emotional and physical well-being and ensures continuing good health and development. Young people enjoy a healthy lifestyle, take regular exercise and choose to eat healthy food options. They learn to budget, plan menus, shop and prepare meals. They also learn about food safety and nutritional content. As a result, young people develop skills to enable them to live independently.

Each young person enjoys a wide range of community-based activities, which promote their social skills. For example, they participate in swimming, sporting activities, cycle rides and a range of indoor games. The staff ensure that individual needs, wishes and preferences are met, which means that young people are supported to access the activities they choose.

Young people benefit from appropriate contact with those people who are important to them. Staff actively promote contact arrangements and where arrangements are changed or disrupted, they support the young people to understand and express their feelings.

Young people are making some progress in their education from their starting points in the home. Young people are supported by staff to commit to regular attendance and this increases their potential to achieve. This provides young people with good

structure and they learn self-discipline. Staff celebrate achievements however small, which helps young people recognise their talents and builds their self-confidence.

Quality of care

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

Young people receive care and support within a nurturing environment that is warm and homely. The care planning process in the home is comprehensive and fully records and acknowledges individual's cultural, religious, ethnic and identity characteristics. The presentation of care plans clearly shows the contribution each young person has made, ensuring they are central to their planning. Staff in the home, external health professionals and members of the local child and adolescent mental health services team, deliver the service and provide on-going support. Staff regularly review care plans to establish that young people's needs are consistently met. As a result, placement objectives are clear and implemented effectively.

Young people benefit from good relationships with a consistent and caring staff team. Meaningful and sustainable relationships have developed, based upon mutual respect and developed trust. One young person said, 'The staff here are nice and spend a lot of time with me. They help me to understand about my care plan and ask me about what I want to do in the future.'

Staff facilitate weekly young people's meetings, giving individuals the opportunity to express their views and make suggestions. Young people contribute to menu planning and devise their activity programme for the forthcoming week. Staff also provide weekly key work sessions, focusing on any issues young people wish to raise and recording their views and suggestions on all aspects of their care. Young people say they feel listened to and are able to see that their requests and suggestions have affected change. Staff are sensitive in their approach to requests that cannot be met. They ensure that they give a careful explanation of the reasons why a request cannot be met and whether there is potential to revisit the request in the future. Young people know how to make a complaint although no complaints have been made since the last inspection.

Young people are encouraged to take charge of their own health care to better prepare them for independence and adulthood. The staff group provides the right balance between nurturing and enabling young people to develop appropriate self-reliance. Young people understand why they are looked after and benefit from regular one-to-one support from staff to discuss their thoughts and feelings. This helps to improve their confidence and raise self-esteem.

Young people are supported to make smooth transitions to independence. Young people develop life skills that prepare them for leaving care, giving them confidence and maturity to face the challenges adult life brings. As a result, young people move on ready and confident for adult life.

Young people live in a bright, modern home which provides sufficient space to meet

their needs. The home is decorated to a good standard and young people have good quality furniture in their bedrooms. The home is located in a residential area with facilities to enable young people to be part of the community as well as having space to engage in individual activities.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people report that they feel safe at the home and that their involvement in unsafe activities has reduced. Good use of risk assessment means that individual risks are identified and barriers to reduce these are implemented well by staff. Staff work well with young people to help keep them safe. They have good links with local community police and protocols have been set up between the local authority and the police to ensure that appropriate action is taken in response to young people's vulnerabilities. This ensures that young people going missing from the home can be identified quickly and returned safely.

Young people's behaviour is generally good. They show an acceptance of one another's differences and are polite and considerate to visitors and staff. Staff very rarely use restraint, with only one incident in the last year. There are 'consequences' imposed by staff to help young people learn from their mistakes; young people state that they think these are generally fair. They understand why boundaries are in place and that these contribute to their personal safety.

There are good child protection policies and procedures in place, which are fully understood by staff. Any allegations are investigated after consultation with relevant professionals and reports of these provide a clear audit trail. This demonstrates that safeguarding procedures are carried out fully and protect young people from potential harm.

Young people benefit from a competent established team of staff. Regular permanent staff promote a consistent approach to behaviour and care, resulting in a stable environment. Staff are selected carefully and undergo thorough checks to ensure they are safe and suitable. Visitors are chaperoned and checked for identification. As a result, young people are further protected.

The home provides a safe and appropriately secure environment. The home has a vigorous health and safety regime, which ensures that all fire precautions, drills and equipment servicing are conducted routinely, consistently and within timescales set by the relevant regulations.

Leadership and management

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

Young people really benefit from a staff team that are dedicated and skilled in providing them with a sense of stability and feeling cared for, at a time of confusion

and upheaval in their lives. Staffing levels are good and adapted in line with any increase in risks and young people's needs. The current operation of the home is in keeping with the service's Statement of Purpose. However, the children's guide to the home does not contain all the information required by regulation; consequently young people may not fully understand all the care practices in the home.

Staff at all levels can highlight areas of strength and areas for improvement. The staff work cohesively as a unified and close team to provide high quality care. Staff are long serving, supervised regularly and unanimous in their positive feedback about working at the home and the way in which they are managed. This has resulted in a motivated team who consistently maintain a high code of professional conduct when caring for young people.

Training needs are identified and sourced over and above mandatory training. For example, training in social pedagogy and restorative practice has been embraced and implemented in the home. This means that young people are cared for by knowledgeable and competent staff who are aware of legal and professional developments.

The manager and staff team promotes a clear emphasis on maintaining meaningful and respectful relationships between staff and young people. There is a committed celebration of individuality and a dedicated response to understanding and facilitating diversity. Young people and staff alike thrive and develop in this positive environment.

The manager has established good internal quality assurance monitoring systems. Regular internal monitoring reports are produced which help the home to develop its practice and ensure that young people are receiving the care and support they need. Monthly audits are undertaken by an external visitor to provide additional quality assurance mechanisms and involve consulting young people wherever possible.

The home has a development plan in place for continuing improvement of care practices in the home; this is reviewed regularly to ensure that it remains on-target. Records are clear, up to date and stored securely. The registered person notifies the appropriate authorities about all significant events relating to the protection of young people accommodated in the home.

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* and the evaluation schedule for the inspection of children's homes.