

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Debbie Foster
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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 children's home provides up to four long-term placements for young people aged from 12 years old up to 17 years old. This home is privately owned.

Overall effectiveness

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

Young people living in this home benefit greatly from a staff group who demonstrate commitment to addressing welfare issues. The staff team are child focused and supportive, creating opportunities for young people to reach their potential. Young people said they have strong and positive relationships with staff. They confirm that their views are routinely sought and acted upon. The staff encourage them to make decisions about their lives and influence the way that the home is run.

Staff are particularly good at making sure that young people are looked after in a way that is specific to how they are and want to be. The young people benefit greatly from the staff's efforts to promote the value of education, and encouragement of good attendance.

Staff work closely with other services to meet the range of young people's needs. Placement planning is good and it is satisfactorily recorded and reviewed. Young people have frequent contact with those who are important to them. Proactive support is in place to help them learn skills that they will need for later in life. This enables young people to make progress in a number of areas within their lives.

Good risk management and fire safety practices help to keep young people safe. Staff are experienced, trained and competent. The manager has suitable systems to monitor to maintain and improve the quality of care in the home.

Shortfalls have been found in the lack of full looked after children documentation to safeguard children's welfare for emergency admissions. There are deficiencies in the written record of measures of control or discipline, relating to the sanctions records. Some areas of the environment are showing signs of wear and tear. Not all staff have attained level 3 Children and Young People workforce diploma qualification. Monitoring systems have not picked up on all deficiencies and omissions.

Areas for improvementStatutory 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
11 (2001)	make proper provision for the welfare of children accommodated. Specifically, ensure that the needs of children admitted in an emergency are known and supported by looked after children documentation (Regulation 11)	12/08/2011
17B (2001)	ensure that the written record of any measure of control, restraint or discipline (specifically the sanction record) includes all the specified areas as set out in the regulation. (Regulation 17(3) (a-i))	28/08/2011

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the service should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure physical restrictions on normal movement within or from the home are not used unless this is necessary to safeguard children, agreed with the responsible authority, and restrictions for one child do not impose similar restrictions on other children (NMS 10.4)
- ensure the environment is kept in a good state of repair and condition. In particular the kitchen, shower room (NMS 10)
- ensure the home's development plan identifies any planned changes in the operation or resources of the service, or confirms the continuation of the home's current operation and resources (NMS 15.2)
- ensure all staff attain a minimum level 3 qualification. Specifically that new staff hold the level 3 Children and Young People Workforce Diploma (NMS 18.5)
- ensure high quality training to meet the needs of the children and purpose of the setting. For example provide training to staff on self harm and youth offending (NMS 18.1)
- ensure effective and efficient management of the children's home. Specifically ensure compliance with regulations and the home's policies and identify all omissions and deficiencies. (NMS 21.2)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

The staff support young people well by talking, and using interactive activities to build relationships with the young people. One staff member said that, 'we listen to young people's requests and grasp these opportunities to engage with them and this

works well.' As a result, young people have gained a good knowledge and understanding of themselves, they are adapting well to new situations and their view of themselves is more positive. Young people's progress at the home is good because great value is placed upon them fulfilling their potential.

Young people enjoy good health because their health needs are effectively identified and services are provided to meet them. They are encouraged and supported to attend routine appointments with dentists, doctors and opticians. Young people are supported to take some responsibility for managing their own health needs such as eczema control and making their own health appointments. The young people's health is closely monitored and record keeping is good. Staff continually work with young people and inform medical professionals of health progress. Specialist health workers are involved where appropriate to promote good health and discourage unhealthy behaviours such as smoking, self harm and drinking alcohol. Healthy activities take place such as swimming, cycling and going to the gym.

Young people can choose their food, and the food served is both healthy and nutritious. The staff are aware of individual young people's likes and dislikes to ensure that they enjoy the food served. Matters arising from diversity are well managed. Staff encourage young people to eat healthy foods and snacks. One young person reinforced this, stating, 'we devise the menus, are involved in cooking meals and I enjoy the food.'

Appropriate educational placements are sourced quickly, young people's education is disrupted as little as possible to ensure that they can attend and achieve. This is due to the staff working in a determined manner, to ensure that young people are making good progress in attendance and achievement in their education. Contact between the home and school is frequent and effective, enabling staff to support young people successfully with homework or personal targets. Staff and other professionals say that the young people's attitude to school has changed as a result of their good experiences of learning, achieving and socialising.

Young people said they have regular phone contact that is important to them, and that they can have friends and family come to visit them. This is supported by staff who encourage contact and facilitate visits very well. This is done safely and sensitively to protect young people's welfare.

Young people learn life skills through taking part in the tasks of running the home, such as social skills, laundry, cooking skills, budgeting and shopping. Young people said there are plans to build on their independence skills now that they have finished their exams. They will be preparing and cooking more meals. They will also be working through an independence booklet to make sure they are well prepared for looking after themselves when they are older. Therefore, young people receive care which is preparing them well for adulthood.

Quality of care

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

Young people living in this home benefit greatly from a staff group who demonstrate their commitment to addressing young people's care and safety needs. Young people confirm this saying that, 'I get on with them all and can go and talk anytime'. The staff team are committed and supportive; they pursue opportunities for young people to assist them in reaching their potential. Staff say that they, 'actively listen to young people, this helps to build trust and relationships with the young people'.

Young people enjoy strong relationships with staff in the home and there is good rapport between them. Staff discuss difficult issues with young people and challenge inappropriate behaviours. Staff state that they work consistently as a team with young people. Each staff member spoke about the individualised care in place for young people. One young person described relationships with the staff as 'good', whilst another described them as, 'really good, I get on with all the staff'.

The views of young people are genuinely sought and acted upon. Constructive ways to help young people to make decisions about their lives and influence the way that the home is run are provided by the staff. Daily chats, one-to-one discussions, key worker sessions and weekly meetings take place to give young people regular opportunities to express their views and opinions. This is part of everyday life for young people and routinely facilitated by the staff. Examples of how young people's choices are implemented include: activities; personalising bedrooms; decorative changes with the home; future placement planning, trips and holidays. Young people say that, 'staff are fair', highlighting examples such as coming in times, consequences and rules around the use of the internet.

The staff handle complaints well. Young people know how to complain and said this has been explained to them at the time they came to live at the home. There is good, clear information in the children's guide about how to complain. This also includes information and contact details of external independent advocate services for young people to contact if they are unhappy. Staff assist young people in making complaints if required and they understand their role as advocate. Complaints are clearly recorded to reflect the action taken by the staff and the outcomes.

Admissions to the home are not always planned but where possible the young person and their family, where appropriate, are involved in that planning. Some young people said they had visited the home before moving in. Young people have their needs assessed well, and satisfactory written placement plans outline how these needs will be met. Their placement plans are sufficiently well recorded with reasonable detail to inform the staff what they need to do to meet the identified needs of individuals. One-to-one work is also undertaken with young people. This focuses on specific areas to the individual young person, giving guidance, advice and support on relevant areas. However, the placing authority has not provided all relevant documentation and information for an emergency placement. Although this has been chased by the manager, this absence of assessment and care planning information does not follow the home's admission procedure. Potentially, not having all relevant information could impact on the individual young person, in that all their needs could not be identified and met.

Young people's needs and development are reviewed regularly in the light of their care and progress at the home. Following reviews, placement plans are updated in a timely fashion. The reviewing system includes participation in the statutory reviews, internal reviews of the placement plan and discussions with the young person in key-worker sessions. Key-workers monitor the placement plans and produce summary reports. Statutory case reviews take place within the required timescales to inform those working at the home and others of progress made by young people.

The staff understand and are aware that individual young people have needs arising from diversity. The young people receive good individualised support. The staff have made good links with services to meet their individual needs. Support services involved with young people include health, care and education of the young people. Young people confirm that staff provide care and support to them in a way that recognises their individuality. Good quality physical and emotional health care by external professionals aids the staff in providing the right support. These professionals provide advice directly to young people and the staff team, to aid positive outcomes for the young people. Examples include support for emotional health and the looked after children's nursing service.

Young people's education is vigorously promoted and has a very high priority. Staff recognise its importance as part of preparation for adulthood. The staff work closely with looked after children's education officers and other education personnel to secure good quality school placements and packages.

Staff strongly focus on and encourage good educational attendance. A notable area of strength is the staff's close communication and support of education staff to sustain and increase the young people's time in education provision. They achieve this through establishing close working relationships with school staff and communicating regularly about progress and individual targets. Achievements are communicated to parents to ensure that young people's positive behaviour is highlighted to them. There are resources and facilities at the home to enable the completion of homework or structured home study programmes. A computer is available for the young people to use for educational purposes and well-monitored internet access is available.

Staff support and encourage young people to pursue their particular interests and leisure activities. They explain the importance of this to encourage appropriate socialising and to enable young people to build self esteem and confidence. Young people said they are well supported by staff and involved in decision making about activities they take part in. Their individual choices, likes and dislikes are taken into account. Examples of organised activities include: gardening; pampering nights; cooking; vegetable growing; bowling; cinema; interactive electronic gaming; swimming and walking. Good policies and practice around the storage, handling, administration and disposal of medication safeguards young people's welfare.

All young people benefit from a home which is decorated and furnished to a satisfactory standard. The home is kept clean and there are homely touches

throughout. Each young person has a single bedroom which they have personalised. There is ample communal space, with a kitchen, separate dining room, chilli out lounge and main TV lounge. There are two bathrooms. The home is located near to shops, health centres and local parks. It is on main bus route close to the city centre. There is a satisfactory maintenance and repair programme for the building, furniture and equipment, and repairs are promptly addressed. The garden is maintained and safe. However, aspects of the home are showing signs of wear and tear. This is evident in the shower room, fitted kitchen, the flooring in the office and in some pieces of furniture within the home.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people's welfare is very important and central to practice. Staff describe safeguarding young people as; 'one of the main elements to our work'. Young people said that the staff are always talking to them about 'keeping safe'. Staff support young people well in learning how to keep themselves safe and to recognise risks. In addition, the manager has established good links with local resources to further support young people, for example with community police, the 'safe at last' group and the drugs awareness group.

Where particular risks are identified, well written risk assessments are recorded to help the staff understand what action to take to minimise the identified risks. However, one issue highlights the need to lock rooms within the service to address an identified risk. Documentation is not detailed and specific enough for staff to know this should be a time limited response to deal with an immediate issue or make clear when this action should cease. Some light switches in communal rooms on the ground floor have also been operated by a key. Young people have been asking staff to turn lights on in these rooms and are not able to operate switches themselves. This practice has ceased during the inspection.

An area of strength is the staff's ability to talk through any identified concerns with young people to develop their own understanding of concerns and the reasons adults worry. As a result young people's risk-taking behaviours have reduced. Young people said the staff are caring and they feel safe.

Staff use team meetings and regular internal placement plan reviews to ensure that everyone is up-to-date about how to promote and protect the young people's safety. There are good safeguarding systems and procedures for staff to follow in the event of any allegation or suspicion of abuse. Staff are trained in child protection and demonstrate good knowledge and understanding of the safeguarding procedures to promote and protect young people's safety. Young people are aware of the anti-bullying message within the home. The subject is discussed on admission to the home and at young people's meetings. One young person said that, 'bullying is not acceptable, staff will deal with this straight away'.

There is good written guidance for staff to follow in the event of unauthorised

absence. This is supported by individualised risk assessment records. The manager secures good multi-agency working, for example liaising with the local missing person officer to ensure a holistic approach to safeguarding. This ensures all agencies are vigilant and work to current plans to offer protection for young people. Young people know the circumstances they will be reported missing. Staff are aware of the individual protocols to follow for each young person to assist in keeping them safe. On-going work is taking place with individual young people to reduce or eliminate this risk taking behaviour. Young people are responding positively and incidents have reduced.

Young people benefit greatly from the implementation of behaviour strategies. These are compiled with input from a psychologist. Staff regularly liaise with the psychologist and receive advice on individualised behaviour management approaches. Physical restraint is very rarely used to manage behaviour. There have been two physical interventions since the last inspection. Staff are trained in the provider's policy and authorised techniques. Staff and young people confirm that the approach to challenging behaviour is to use de-escalation techniques. A young person said, 'staff give me time out to calm down'. Young people commented that the staff are fair when dealing with their behaviour.

Any sanctions used are relevant and reflect the age and understanding of the young people. They are reviewed regularly for effectiveness. In the main, appropriate information record is kept and there is evidence that it is monitored to identify patterns or trends that can be used to support young people further. However, shortfalls have been found in the recording of some sanction records, because the description of the lead-up to the event is not always recorded in full.

All staff working at the home have received up-to-date fire safety training to enable them to minimise the risks to young people in the event of a fire at the home. This is supported by regular fire safety checks to help ensure that young people's physical safety from fire in the home is well protected. The installation of electronic door closers have ensured that doors are not wedged open, avoiding a potential fire hazard. Good checks and maintenance arrangements ensure the home is kept physically safe. All staff have been appropriately recruited and undergone suitable Criminal Records Bureau checks to ensure that they are safe to work with young people.

Leadership and management

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

The majority of the previous actions and recommendations have been implemented since the last inspection. There are no current restrictions on contact arrangements for young people. Staff have undertaken training in behaviour management, first aid, the complaints procedure and child protection.

A Statement of Purpose is available to inform professionals and members of the public about how care is provided at the home. There is a good children's guide to the statement which is appropriate to the age and understanding of the children

accommodated. Young people receive a copy of it before they come to live at the home so that they know what to expect if they go to live there.

There is a consistent staff team, which has been added to recently to broaden the range of skills and experience among its members. The staff said that, 'we have a diverse workforce' and, 'we work very well as a team'. Staff receive regular supervision from the management team and work with supportive colleagues.

Young people receive care from competent and experienced staff. All staff receive core, mandatory and other training areas related to the needs of the young people they are caring for. An ongoing programme of regular refresher training is provided in a range of subjects to enhance the staff team's competency to meet the needs of the young people. However, not all care staff have yet completed a National Vocational Qualification level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People or an equivalent. Staff recognise the need to have further specialist training in self harm and youth offending.

The manager has a generally sound system to monitor, report and evaluate the administration of the home. This is supported by regular unannounced visits from the provider to monitor and improve the quality of care at the home. However, some areas of monitoring are not as robust as others. Areas highlighted in this inspection have not been identified within the auditing of the service. Although there is a development plan, it does not set out clearly the specific planned changes in the operation or resources of the service, or confirm the continuation of the home's current operation and resources.

Young people's case file records and other written documentation overall are to a good standard. Individual case records reflect their development and progress. This facilitates good communication with other professionals as well as ensuring young people have a permanent and secure record of their history. Good cross-referencing of documentation enables the management team and staff to evaluate and monitor young people's progress. Young people's individual case files are confidentially stored and are arranged in a manner that makes them useable by staff. The young people know that they can have access to their records.

Staff are particularly good at making sure that young people are looked after in a way that is particular to how they are and want to be. This is particularly evident around activities, health, safety and education. Young people's cultural and religious needs are taken into account during the care planning and review process. Staff have a good understanding of individual young people's needs and ensure that these are met on a practical level. Staff also demonstrate good practice around equality and diversity through their good practice in areas such as valuing education, behaviour and work around physical and emotional health. Young people have access to a team that is balanced in terms of race, age, background and gender, and have access to a variety of services in the local and wider community.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.

