

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Linda Brown
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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 home is one of a group of homes operated by the same organisation as part of a tendering contract with a local council. Accommodation is provided for up to three young people between the ages of 12 years and 16 years.

Overall effectiveness

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

This home provides an outstanding quality of care to the young people it accommodates. Young people benefit from living in a home that is well managed and with staff who are enthusiastic, experienced, supported and well trained. The management and staff provide a very positive environment where young people feel safe; receive good support and health care and are encouraged to develop their independence and individuality. Education is valued, behaviour is well managed and there are good relationships between the staff and young people. Young people are encouraged to develop positive relationships with their families and significant adults in their lives. Young people confirm that they take an active role in decisions being made about their futures and in the day-to-day living at the home. The management team make good use of the robust monitoring system in place to continually develop and improve the care provided to the young people. This practice creates a caring and nurturing environment for young people to develop and flourish.

No requirements or recommendations are made as a result of this inspection.

Areas for improvement

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Key workers have an excellent knowledge of the background and individual needs of the young people and actively promote their confidence and understanding. Staff provide young people with individual support to enable them to develop confidence and a positive view of themselves.

Outstanding care and support is provided to address a young person's physical, emotional and psychological needs. Health needs are identified within the placement plans and links are established with a range of health professionals who work in partnership with staff and young people. Robust systems are in place for the safe storage, administration and disposal of medication and all staff complete the appropriate training before they are able to administer medication. This means that

young people are provided with the appropriate professional support to assess, identify and address their individual health needs.

Young people are encouraged and supported to maintain positive relationships with the significant people in their lives and are fully aware of the contact arrangements in place. Staff demonstrate a good understanding of the importance of this contact and go to great lengths to facilitate contact and form good relationships with families.

All young people attend educational placements and are encouraged by staff who demonstrate a pride in the attendance achieved by the young people when taking into account their attendance at the start of their placements. Young people speak positively regarding their school placements. Staff are committed to supporting the young people's education and liaise regularly with schools to ensure that positive outcomes are achieved.

Independent skills are developed at a level appropriate to the young person's developmental age and needs. Pathway plans are completed with young people who are approaching adulthood. Young people are currently not old enough to be on full independence programmes, however, they are encouraged to complete age appropriate tasks in order to provide a gradual progression into planning for moving on to a semi-independent programme. This enables young people to develop the skills required to make a successful transition into adulthood.

Quality of care

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

Relationships between staff and young people are relaxed, positive and good natured with lots of humour. Young people speak highly of the relationships they form with staff. One young person stated that when they came to the home they did not want to form relationships or like the staff but now things are really different and they get on well with the staff.

There are some excellent systems in place to ensure that the views and wishes of young people are taken into account. Young people say that they are always listened to and their wishes and feelings are actively sought to influence the way the home is run. For example, young people stated that they had chosen the colour scheme and furnishings for the lounge areas of the home. Young people are also aware of the reasons why it is not always possible to act upon their wishes.

Staff and young people are aware of the process involved if young people wish to make a complaint. Leaflets are freely available in the home and action is promptly taken to address any concern and resolve the issue. Young people state that they are aware of the complaints system, however, if they are unhappy about anything or anyone then they just tell staff. Young people are confident that the issues will then be taken seriously and resolved.

Young people's plans are child-focused and clearly identify all aspects of their individual needs to include any requirements regarding culture, race, religion and gender. These plans provide an excellent tool for staff to ensure that the appropriate support is provided to young people from a range of professionals, such as, the Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS), the youth offending team, specialist services and consultants. Plans are regularly monitored, reviewed and updated to ensure that information is current and relevant. Risk assessments identify any areas of concerns and offer staff guidance for managing and minimising the risks. Young people are fully involved in the planning process and are encouraged to share their views and attend all their meetings. This practice ensures that young people's needs are supported and that their views are sought regarding the planning and decisions being made about their futures.

The management and staff value the importance of education and are very motivated to support young people to achieve their full potential. Young people attend school and staff work closely with schools to resolve any issues immediately. They effectively challenge barriers that may jeopardise educational placements. Staff stated that they attend parents' evenings and events at school and celebrate achievements. Facilities are provided for young people to complete their homework. This means that young people are given the opportunities and support to reach their full academic potential.

During the holiday period young people participated in a range of activities to include theme parks, day trips and local outings. Activity planners are completed weekly, however, the Registered Manager has picked up through his monitoring that since returning to school, young people are opting out of participating in organised activities as well as their individual hobbies and interests. This has been addressed in a recent staff meeting and staff are looking at other ways to engage the young people as well as recognising that they need time to socialise with their peers. Staff are enthusiastic about the ideas they have to engage young people and activities are being planned for the forthcoming half term break. This practice ensures that young people have the opportunities to experience a range of enjoyable and purposeful activities.

Outstanding work takes place regarding equality and diversity. Young people speak positively about the support they receive from staff regarding their cultural background and personal identity. One young person discussed the allowance provided for personal items and the choices available for personal, dietary and religious needs. Work takes place around personal and sexual identity, themed nights are regularly held at the home and different countries are chosen. Staff plan the evenings in advance and the room is decorated and traditional food is served. Information is provided with background and history about the country and quizzes and competitions are also held during the evening. Recently young people attended an evening themed on disability to give the young people an understanding of what its like, for example, to be in a wheelchair. This practice not only ensures young people have their own needs addressed but also provides them with an understanding of other people's beliefs and values.

The home is situated within walking distance of local shops. There are local bus routes to allow easy access to the nearest city and surrounding areas. It is in keeping with the local community. The home provides a pleasant, warm and comfortable environment. Furnishings and décor are of a good standard and there is an ongoing development plan for maintenance and decoration. Young people's bedrooms are being personalised to their own tastes. Young people speak positively about the influence they have had on the décor and colour schemes in the home.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

The management and staff put the safety and protection of young people at the forefront of their work. There are excellent systems and procedures to support this and young people comment that they feel safe at the home. Any concerns or issues around bullying are instantly addressed. Staff work with schools, parents and young people in a variety of ways to ensure that they understand the consequences of their behaviours and the effect it can have on others.

Good working relationships are formed with the local safeguarding board. Staff speak with confidence about the colour coded systems in place for referral and the excellent and regular training that is provided to ensure that staff are fully aware of the procedures. Staff state that managers are always available should they need further advice. The Registered Manager is clear about his role and the prompt action to take in the event of an allegation or suspicion of harm. Young people are protected because staff have a good knowledge and understanding of the process to follow if they are concerned about anything or anyone.

The management and staff are able to demonstrate an excellent awareness of the risks involved to young people when they go missing from the home. Although there are robust procedures for staff to follow, young people continue to make choices that expose them to risk whilst they are missing from the home. The management and staff are acutely aware of the dangers and risks and are working closely with a range of professionals, such as, CAMHS, police, doctors, social workers and commissioning teams to resolve and reduce these risks. The manager provides daily information to the local authority in order to obtain the appropriate recourses to reduce the incidents of young people going missing. Records show an increase in the number of incidents, however, this is due to a change in the reporting practice as some young people pose a significantly higher risk and, therefore, are now being reported missing immediately in line with their care plans and risk assessments. The management and staff are doing all they can to engage and protect young people and are awaiting confirmation from the local authority regarding the date of an emergency planning meeting to address the concerns being raised. Despite the measures in place at the home young people continue to be at risk when they are missing from the home.

Positive reward schemes are provided to young people to encourage and support them to behave well. Young people speak positively about their rewards and fully

understand the goals they need to achieve to gain their individual rewards. Young people state that the rules are fair and they are aware of the reasons why any sanction is given. The use of physical intervention is minimal and only ever used as a last resort. Staff confirm that they receive the appropriate training but clearly demonstrate the need to defuse any potential situation where ever possible in order to reduce the need for an intervention to take place. In the event of a sanction or restraint being used appropriate records are maintained which are monitored by the Regulation 33 visitor and the Registered Manager.

Young people are protected and cared for by staff who are appropriately vetted and checked. Recruitment is completed in line with the organisation's recruitment and selection process. The Registered Manager is able to explain the process involved. Ofsted have planned to complete a full inspection of recruitment records in October 2011. Visitors sign in and are checked on arrival and briefed on fire evacuation procedures. There is a designated member of staff responsible for health and safety, risk assessments, fire checks and equipment checks; all are maintained and up to date. This practice means that young people live in a safe and well maintained environment.

Leadership and management

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

The recently appointed manager is now registered with Ofsted. Since his appointment he has worked closely with the staff team and undertaken detailed monitoring in order to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the home. He has since devised a plan to further develop the service. Young people benefit from being cared for by a manager who is experienced, qualified, very motivated and committed to developing the service for young people.

The Statement of Purpose is regularly reviewed and updated to ensure that it provides young people, their families and professionals with up-to-date information about the home to enable them to make an informed choice. A handbook is available for young people which includes information regarding all aspects of the home.

A strength of the home is the enthusiastic, competent and consistent staff team who are totally committed to putting the best interests of the young people at the heart of their work enabling them to provide outstanding care and support. The staff team provides a good balance in terms of age, gender and ethnicity. Staff speak highly of the support they provide to each other and the open and honest relationships they have which enables them to discuss issues and practice in an open and professional way. Staff speak positively of the accessibility of the management team who provide excellent support and guidance through a clear management structure.

Staff development is supported and encouraged, staff confirm that they have access to a range of excellent training opportunities and are given the support and confidence to develop their knowledge and career. In addition to mandatory training; induction and recognised qualifications such as the Children and Young People's

Workforce Diploma, specialist training is available if a specific need is identified. Training is monitored through staff supervision and appraisal. Staff state that supervision takes place regularly and is of good quality looking at a range of areas to include practice. This ensures that staff are supported and have the skills to meet the needs of the young people they care for.

Rotas provide adequate staffing in line with young people's placement plans. The provider's own bank staff provide cover in the case of an emergency, however, the manager ensures that the same bank staff are used in order to maintain consistency for the young people.

Robust and detailed monitoring systems are in place; Regulation 33 visits take place monthly and are detailed and thorough, requiring action to be taken by the manager if any shortfalls are identified. In addition, the manager completes his Schedule 6 monitoring in line with Regulation 34. Evidence shows that any shortfalls raised via the monitoring process are immediately addressed.

Young people's records are well maintained, up-to-date and securely stored. The manager has a good understanding of the need to report all significant events relating to the protection of children and ensure that all the relevant professionals are notified should a concern arise. This practice ensures that appropriate action is taken to protect young people following a significant event.

Equality and diversity practice is **outstanding**.