

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Robert Curr
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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 registered to provide care and accommodation for up to two young people aged between 10 and 17 years. The home provides care for young people who may need support with emotional and behavioural difficulties. The home aims to support young people to return to family, move to foster carers, or live in the home until they are ready to live independently.

Two young people were present and contributed fully to the inspection.

Overall effectiveness

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

From their starting points young people make positive progress by living here. Not all care plans reflect young people's needs as individuals or contain sufficient information to enable staff, to promote successful outcomes for them. The plans received from placing authorities could be improved, to provide staff with more detailed information. However, this has not had a negative impact on young people's care.

Young people live in a safe environment and there are good arrangements made for young people's health, welfare and safety. Young people are kept safe and they are positive about their individual experiences. Relationships between young people and staff are a strong and impressive feature. For example, a young person currently resident at the home states, 'the staff are ace and help me in loads of different ways'.

Staff provide young people with continuity of care and this enables young people to form and develop trusting relationships with staff. Whilst there is a young people's guide to the service it does not contain the contact details of the independent reviewing officer, or the Children's Rights Director, for young people to refer to in times of need.

The home has a committed management team who actively oversee and monitor the quality of young people's care. This ensures that the home operates well in accordance with its statement of purpose. The staff team are experienced and all are appropriately qualified. The manager is aware of the services' strengths and the organisation is in the process of producing a written development plan to enable them to identify potential weaknesses or areas for improvement. Young people are positive about the care and support provided to them. Comments include: 'Staff are really good to me and I have a lot of fun', and 'since I came to live here my behaviours and attitude have improved.'

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
33 (2001)	interview with their consent and in private, such of the children accommodated there, as appears necessary in order to form an opinion of the standard of care provided in the home. (Regulation 33 (4) (a))	01/08/2011

Recommendations

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

- ensure that the home is well maintained and decorated, in particular, the carpet on the stairs and first floor area (NMS 10.3)
- ensure the children's guide contains information to enable young people to contact their independent reviewing officer and the Children's Rights Director (NMS 13.5).
- ensure that placement plans are sufficiently detailed and promote all aspects of young people's needs (NMS 25.1)
- ensure all existing 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**.

Young people make good progress because of the positive support provided to them. The home works in partnership with the organisations' educational support services to ensure that young people benefit from, and have access to, positive educational opportunities. Most do well in education and from a starting point, educational attendance, achievement and engagement with education is good. Staff actively support young people with their education and this helps young people to become capable learners.

Young people are well treated as individuals and they receive good levels of individual support to meet their needs. There is a positive approach towards promoting young people's good health, which encourages young people to lead a healthy lifestyle. For example, young people learn to eat healthily and exercise is actively promoted. Young people who require additional support, such as therapy, receive the help and support they need.

All young people have access to dentists, doctors and opticians to promote healthy outcomes for them. Staff provide young people with advice and support on health related issues and this enables young people to develop their knowledge and awareness of health issues. One young person states that, 'staff encourage me to take responsibility for my own health'.

Young people are provided with activities that are of individual interest to them, including playing board games together at home and trips out. Young people enjoy these activities and they clearly benefit from them. Such opportunities enable young people to develop their social skills and make friendships.

Staff provide young people with structured encouragement and unconditional support, and this promotes their well-being. Young people benefit from the individualised support provided to them and they learn to cope with past experiences. With good support, young people learn to develop their emotional resilience. The organisation provides services that promote continuity in young people's lives and this enables them to form trusting relationships and positive attachments with staff.

Staff ensure that young people have access to professional support and this enables young people's needs to be well met. Young people are well supported with contact, which is actively encouraged to help young people maintain their relationships with their families and friends.

Quality of care

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

The accommodation provided for young people is homely in design, but parts of the house are not well maintained. In particular, the stair carpet is very worn and stained. This does not offer a pleasant environment for young people to have pride in. Young people are provided with their own bedrooms, which they are free to personalise. The location of the home does not provide young people with easy access to public transport or facilities as it is situated in an isolated rural area. The staff ensure that young people have access to school and leisure activities by using a suitable vehicle.

Young people have access to confidential advice on relevant health issues, including advice and support with their emotional, sexual and physical health. Young people therefore know that they can turn to staff for support in times of need. Staff promote young people's good health by ensuring they have appropriate access to routine health services, such as, doctors, dentists and opticians. Young people also have access to therapy and mental health services. Such support enables young people to be healthy both physically and emotionally.

Young people say that they know how to make a complaint although rarely feel the need to. Young people have access to the children's rights service. However, the contact details of their independent reviewing officer and the Children's Rights Director are not currently included within the children's guide to promote young people's right to representation and independent advice. This restricts the types of services young people can access in times of need.

Young people state that staff listen to their views and opinions. Frequent opportunities such as group meetings and individual sessions enable young people to contribute to the running of the home. Overall this involves young people actively in day-to-day decisions.

From their starting points, young people make positive progress with their education and are actively supported by staff to attend school. Those who require additional support get the support they need to avoid possible exclusion. The home works closely with the organisations' educational support staff, which enables young people to achieve well. Young people take part in a range of enjoyable activities and they are able to pursue activities and hobbies of individual interest to them.

Young people's care plans, whilst individualised, are not comprehensively detailed in all cases to reflect their individual needs in all outcome areas. Young people's views are included within their plans and they are able to make a positive contribution in their reviews. The relationships between young people and staff are positive and these are built on trust and mutual respect.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people say they feel safe and that staff support them to keep safe. Staff are appropriately trained in child protection and this enables them to manage young people's risk taking behaviours safely. Staff know how to recognise and respond to any suspected abuse and any safeguarding concerns are responded in a prompt manner.

Staff respond to young people's behaviours positively, with the use of restraints and sanctions kept to an absolute minimum. Rewards systems, encouragement and praise are all used very effectively with positive behaviours actively rewarded. Where young people do make mistakes, staff work closely with them to help them make sense of their errors and judgements. Any issues with bullying are managed effectively, in line with the home's policies and procedures. The home has zero tolerance towards bullying, and young people are educated about bullying so that they understand why it is wrong. Young people who go missing are protected and staff follow agreed protocols and procedures to promote their safe return. Young people are always greeted upon their return and made to feel welcome. This shows young people they are cared for.

Young people benefit from an experienced and stable staff team. Appropriate recruitment procedures ensure only suitable adults work in the home. The home provides young people with a safe environment. Individual risk assessments and behaviour management strategies inform staff how to work safely. Regular servicing of fire safety systems and electrical appliances maintains a safe environment. Regular fire drills enable young people to understand the home's emergency fire evacuation procedures.

Leadership and management

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

There are a number of quality assurance processes, including monthly monitoring visits by other managers. Although these reports make recommendations there is no clear evidence that young people are consulted as part of these visits and the regulation 33 reports do not contain their views. Therefore it is not clear whether young people can actively contribute about the quality of their care during independent visits. The registered manager also produces a comprehensive monthly report that includes issues raised by key workers. Amongst some of the issues for inclusion are consultations with children and social workers and recording systems. All significant events are reported to the appropriate authorities in accordance with the home's statutory responsibilities.

The leadership and management of the home is good. The registered manager is suitably experienced and qualified and the home demonstrates a positive commitment towards training and staff development; although not all staff are qualified or hold a national vocational qualification. Staff regularly undertake additional training to enhance their knowledge and skills and this enables them to meet the diverse needs of the young people they care for. Staff supervision is consistently undertaken to ensure that they receive appropriate support. Sufficient numbers of staff are employed to meet the needs and numbers of the young people. The management structure of the home is strengthened by the use of a deputy manager. There are clear lines of accountability and sufficient arrangements exist, for other managers to deputise in the registered manager's absence.

The registered manager routinely monitors the quality of care. This enables staff to understand the home's strengths and weaknesses, so action can be taken to rectify identified shortfalls and improve staff performance where necessary. The home meets the aims and objectives of its statement of purpose, but does not have a written development plan to highlight areas for potential improvement. Therefore any progress in quality is not explicit or easily measurable. Some work is already being undertaken to review the home's performance in view of the revised national minimum standards.

Although the recommendations from the previous inspection were acted upon, the matters that have arisen from this inspection are similar. This is in part due to the fact that the setting has not been in use.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.