

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Nicola McEvinney
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This local authority children's home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to seven young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

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 are making good progress in all areas of their lives. They are well supported by a committed and caring staff team who are enthusiastic and celebrate their achievements.

The group of young people have diverse needs and receive individualised support to ensure that these needs are well met.

Young people are safe and they confirm that they feel safe. They are enjoying living in a stable home where they respond positively to the consistent and fair boundaries that are in place.

The new management arrangements have been welcomed by the young people, staff and professionals working with the home. Staff feel empowered resulting in a shared ethos with young people's experiences being central to how the home operates.

A minor shortfall was identified relating to the verification of references for new staff.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure telephone enquiries are made as well as obtaining written references. (NMS 16.1)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people enjoy secure attachments with the staff team. They are making good progress in all aspects of their lives and have developed emotional resilience and a positive self-view.

Young people benefit from having their health needs well met. There are good links with the looked after children nurse who speaks positively about the staff's proactive approach in ensuring the young people's health needs are attended to. For example, all are registered with a doctor, dentist and optician. For some individuals they have not had an optician's appointment for four years and following their consultation were prescribed spectacles. Young people further benefit by staff's commitment in ensuring equipment required for medical conditions is obtained, which ensures young people's dignity is preserved. Young people are encouraged to make their own health appointments which gives them a level of independence. They are provided with healthy and nutritious meals ensuring that they have a well-balanced diet.

Young people have an awareness of the impact of drug misuse. Although there is the occasional use of cannabis, the incidence of this and the use of other substances have greatly reduced. This promotes their health and well-being.

Young people benefit from having an education placement identified. The majority are good attendees and are making very good progress. Those young people whose attendance is sporadic, staff has managed to persuade them to attend for exams. This has a positive impact on their life opportunities.

Young people enjoy living in a home where they are able to express themselves and their personalities are reflected in their surroundings. For example, numerous tastefully mounted photographs are displayed around the home, some portrait other landscapes. This demonstrates that young people's work is valued. They also participate in community projects include organising a coffee morning for a cancer charity; a red nose day event and links with the community garden. This helps them to develop social responsibility. The home is also commemorating three staffs passing by erecting a bench in the homes grounds. An area of the extensive garden has been utilised to grow fruit and vegetables. This helps young people to develop skills and knowledge as well of providing them with healthy home grown produce.

Young people enjoy constructive contact with significant people. Parents and extended family speak highly of the support their children receive from the home and the support they receive in maintaining contact. Young people's friends are made welcome in the home and participate in some of the home's activities. This promotes young people's well-being and self-esteem.

Young people are confident in their independence skills. They are given age appropriate opportunities to have a short stay in a training flat where they can practise these skills to help them prepare for the transition to adulthood. There are close links with the leaving care workers who commend the staff on the support given to young people to prepare them for adult life.

Quality of care

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

Young people enjoy warm, supportive and constructive relationships with the staff team who offer a good level of care. They say that they feel well cared for. They also enjoy good relationships with each other. This was demonstrated by them participating in a celebration party to mark a three year anniversary of living at the home.

Young people benefit from having their views heard in all aspects of how the home operates and in how they are to be cared for. A children's rights worker speaks highly of the open door policy of the manager and feels welcomed into the home. Young people say that they feel listened to and there is always someone they can talk to.

Young people benefit from individual behaviour management plans being in place. These identify triggers to potentially unwanted behaviours with strategies in place advising staff on how these situations can be de-escalated. The incidence of challenging behaviours is minimal which demonstrates that the young people are enjoying living in a stable environment where they feel that they are being treated fairly.

Young people benefit from having their individual needs set out in a care plan with guidance in place on how these needs are to be met. Individual daily routines set out the particular routine of each young person ensuring a consistent approach is maintained. This promotes their well-being. All the young people are aware of their plan and are encouraged to attend their child care review. For those young people who choose not to attend they are kept fully informed of any discussion held and decisions made.

Young people benefit from accessing a range of services to help to support their needs. For example, a youth support service works with individuals on particular issues such as anger management; a drug and alcohol service supports them on substance misuse; a reparation team helps young people in a restorative justice approach. This service helps young people by raising their awareness on more vulnerable members of our society by undertaking tasks such as gardening and decorating for them. This helps them to develop social responsibility and compassion. The child and adolescent mental health service supports young people's emotional needs; a worker from this service is also available to staff for individual consultations and attends staff meetings to offer support and guidance to the team.

Young people are advantaged by the support they receive from the staff team who value their education. The local authority has a looked after children education team who works closely with the home and is immediately aware of any absences. This enables close working partnership to address non-school attendance.

Young people enjoy a range of activities. For example, during half term they went to a theme park and go to the cinema. The group are of an age where they make their own leisure arrangements and they are all encouraged to bring friends to the home and to participate in celebrations.

Young people are well supported in having their needs relating to ethnicity, religion, disability and sexuality attended to. They benefit from having staff employed that reflect their ethnicity and understand the intricacies of particular religions.

The young people enjoy living in a well-maintained home that has been redecorated. Throughout the home there are numerous pictures displayed, creating a child friendly environment. The practice of locking doors, particularly the kitchen, pantry and bathrooms has ceased and young people have ready access to all areas of the home and to staff.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people are safeguarded by staff who have a good understanding of safeguarding issues and are zealous in ensuring vulnerable young people are protected. Young people say that they feel safe and there is no bullying in the home.

The incidence of young people going missing is minimal; when they do go missing the young people are generally staying at friends' houses. There are individual protocols in place advising staff what action to take in the event of a young person failing to return to the home when expected.

The incidence of young people being involved in risk taking behaviours, such as substance abuse, has greatly reduced which promotes their welfare.

The home has constructive links with a worker linked to the police who is responsible for children who are sexually exploited. He is to work with the home to update protocols and to offer training to a couple of staff members in order for them to be specialists in this area. This individual is also offering training to young people to raise their awareness of this problem. However, at this time none of the young people are involved in this issue.

The young people benefit from living in a stable home; relationships with the staff are built on trust and respect which creates harmony. There are very few sanctions metered out over the last few months which reflects this stability. The Manager on reviewing some sanctions has reversed the action taken which is a further demonstration of respect for the young people. However, there are individual crisis

management plans in place identifying potential unwanted behaviours with guidance in place to de-escalate situations.

Young people are protected by having good recruitment processes in place that ensure that only suitable people are employed in the home. However, these could be more robust if references were verified with the referee by telephone.

Young people are protected by staff who take responsibility to challenge oppressive practice by using the whistleblowing procedures.

Young people are safeguarded by having individual risk assessments in place identifying potential dangers with clear strategies in place to minimise the risk. All health and safety checks are carried out to ensure young people are cared for in a safe environment.

Leadership and management

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

The new management arrangements are welcomed by staff, young people and professionals working with the home. All are unanimous in saying the manager's transparent and open approach creates a supportive and child friendly environment where young people flourish. The Manager is applying to Ofsted to become registered.

Young people are cared for by a staff team who are well-trained and supervised, providing a good level of care. The team are empowered and enthusiastic to ensure that they have a positive impact on young people's lives.

The home was judged to be inadequate at the last full inspection; all requirements and recommendations raised at that inspection were addressed by the interim inspection. The home continues to improve, in particular the environment is much less institutional. This is due to all areas of the home being accessible, including the staff corridor allowing young people ready access to staff, as well as pictures and ornaments around the home.

The Statement of Purpose is a comprehensive document clearly outlining what service the home has to offer. On admission young people are given information about what they can expect from coming to live at the home.

There are robust monitoring systems in place with the Regulation 33 visitor speaking to young people and their parents who speak highly of the care provided.

The home enjoys good relationships within the local community. It is the home's intention that to share any spare produce from their horticultural efforts with the community.

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.