

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Angus Mackay
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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 accommodate and care for up to three residents. The home provides short to medium-term residential care for children and young people. Most admissions are planned but the home will accept emergency admissions. Education in line with national curriculum is available on site although an external school is currently under development. Weekly therapeutic sessions are provided by external Child and Adolescent Psychotherapists to the young people. The home is a three-storey property in a residential area, with a basement flat that is not designated for use by the children's home.

Overall effectiveness

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

The home benefits from the excellent leadership of the Registered Manager whose highly effective monitoring and use of management information ensures that staff are properly prepared to provide good care to young people in line with their well maintained care plans. Young people are fully engaged in and consulted about their care plans and their views are reflected in these plans.

Young people make good progress in all aspects of their development, and there is good practice in ensuring their health needs are addressed. Young people say they like the home, feel safe there and are protected from harm by staff they get on well with. They have free access to the home's telephone but currently have to ask staff for this. Education is a strength of the home and all young people are well supported by staff in their engagement in this aspect of their life.

Young people live in a safe environment where positive behaviour is encouraged and there is clear evidence of considerable success in reducing aggressive behaviours in all young people. Safeguarding of young people is good but improvements need to be made to the recording of decisions in staff appointments. Staff are successful in getting young people to raise a range of complaints, gripes and grumbles in their meeting but this would potentially be improved by transferring this to one location to aid analysis by the Registered Manager. All young people and staff are exceptionally knowledgeable about fire procedures but there is no recorded evidence of them all taking part in fire evacuations, such as when toast burned, despite them saying they had.

Young people engage positively in community activities with other young people in the area. The home however has not got a good relationship with all of its neighbours and has not communicated many positive initiatives in place to address issues to relevant parties.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure that there are clear and effective procedures for controlling the activities of the home in relation to serious complaints about the provision and the quality of the provision, particularly in relation to neighbourhood relationships (NMS 21.1)
- ensure that there is a record of the recruitment and vetting checks which have been carried out on those working for the children's home in particular a detailed recording of the discussion about any gaps in employment and recording of checks on past employment (NMS 16.3)
- ensure that all complaints, including those made informally, are entered in the complaint book to allow monitoring of these and to identify any concerns about specific incidents and to identify patterns and trends (NMS 21.2)
- ensure that children have access to independent advice and support from adults who they can contact directly and in private, in particular that they have access to a telephone without asking a member of staff (NMS 1.5)
- ensure that the system for recruiting staff includes an effective system for reaching decisions as to who is to be appointed and those to be refused appointment (NMS 16.5)
- ensure that all staff and where practicable children have practised the emergency escape plan.(NMS 10.9)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people live in a home which requires and supports them to actively participate in education. Some of the young people have not been in education for a considerable number of years and they are given excellent support to prepare them to re-engage in mainstream school or college. All young people show good improvement in educational engagement and eventually in educational attainment appropriate to their potential. Young people who receive education within the home show good improvement in engagement, building up their time in school commensurate with their developing ability to cope with the social and educational programme.

Young people make excellent progress with basic health care engaging in healthy eating programmes, good exercise and all appointments with a general practitioner, looked after children nurse, optician and dentist. Where necessary young people are

helped with attending appointments with the local child and adolescent mental health services or with the in-house child and adolescent psychotherapist. Social workers describe complex mental health issues which the home has helped young people to successfully address leading to improved health outcomes in other areas such as immunisations.

Young people are aided by therapists and key workers to develop a clear understanding of who they are and where they come from. Staff work hard with young people to provide them with excellent links to their families and significant others to aid in their development of an understanding of their background. Young people's social workers say that staff are excellent at working with often fractious parents and at ensuring appointments are kept and that parents are well informed about key events in their child's life. One social worker said that the home speaks to the mother of a young person every day and supply regular reports to her about the young person.

Young people are encouraged to prepare for life after being in care. They say that staff help them to learn how to look after themselves by encouraging them to cook, bake, tidy their rooms and look after their own personal hygiene. Young people are encouraged to engage fully in further education with recent leavers moving on to college. They are also encouraged to maintain appropriate contact with the home such as any child leaving home would do, for example, coming in for Sunday lunch or telephoning for advice about general issues. One recent leaver is doing work experience with the home's maintenance team.

Quality of care

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

Young people say they enjoy being in the home with comments such as, 'it is the best place I have ever been,' 'the staff are great I like them all' and 'there is nothing to improve it is all great'. They benefit from a good standard of care provided by a diverse staff group who are well trained, suitably experienced and enthusiastic. Social workers comment that the staff are particularly good at relationship building with the young people who come to them with significant difficulties in this area. Young people are polite to guests and relaxed with staff engaging positively in conversations. They say that staff listen to them and they can influence decisions in the home including how their room is, meals and even staff appointments. This increases young people's sense of engagement in the home and control of their environment.

Maintaining or developing relationships for young people with families or significant others is seen as exceptionally important and contact is encouraged and developed by staff. Young people are encouraged by care staff and therapists to take an interest in their personal identity and family background to aid their development. Their family are encouraged to visit and staff give assistance to ensure this happens to the benefit of the young people. Social workers gave examples of ways in which the home ensure visits occur and that commitments are not broken to the detriment

and upset of the young person including picking up individuals or whole families from a considerable distance away. This aids the young people in maintaining or developing their sense of identity and belonging within their home communities.

Young people have access to both routine and specialist medical help with a strong emphasis on promoting the well-being of the individual young person. They live in a home which works exceptionally hard at helping them to address their personal health and behavioural issues using individual targets agreed with them and supported by weekly counselling and regular key working. Staff ensure that medication is safely stored and issued, getting the young people actively involved in signing that they have received the medication and in understanding what the medication is for and what it is intended to achieve. Young people are able to explain what medication they receive and describe how it benefits them. Social workers say that health care is a particular strength of the home and that young people make significant progress in often complex health issues, with this support from the home.

Young people are very knowledgeable about the complaints procedure and the staff work exceptionally hard at ensuring they are kept safe and afforded opportunities to discuss complaints or grumbles. The excellent gathering of low level complaints would benefit from being collated in one place to ease analysis. Young people say that they can have contact with their family, social worker or others identified in their contact lists and that staff allow them to use the home's telephone to do this. They are happy with this manner of contact but they must have access to external contacts without recourse to staff and the home have plans to rectify this deficit.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people are happy and relaxed in the home and present as trusting of staff. They are appropriately protected by a range of safeguarding measures including systems to recruit appropriate staff, to deal with child protection issues or complaints, by contact with people independent of the home, excellent gate-keeping and supervision of visitors and comprehensive training of staff in respect of the safeguarding of children. Recruitment checks indicate that all appropriate measures are followed but would be improved by better recording of decisions relating to the appointment process and how these decisions are reached.

Most young people rarely go missing from the home and staff are aware of what action to take to comply with police protocols and in relation to each young person's individual risks. Young people benefit from a staff team committed to working closely with other professionals to address issues leading to them going missing from care. Staff persevere with a range of interventions to ensure the safe care of young people and by making and resourcing clear actions to maintain young people's safety.

Young people make significant progress in addressing aggression and anger management issues whilst in the home. One social worker commented that the home had addressed issues of aggression exceptionally well with the young person they

placed there. Young people are encouraged to negotiate with staff and to structure their time productively to give them control and to diminish situations of conflict. They constantly seek to clarify instructions or arrangements with staff who are clear in their communication to them and work closely with each other to avoid manipulation or avoidance by the young people. Young people say that staff treat bullying very seriously and ensure that any incident with the potential to lead to bullying is addressed immediately.

Staff constantly talk to young people getting them to reflect on situations and to accept appropriate boundaries but sometimes use physical interventions to contain dangerous situations. Where it has been necessary the use of restraint has diminished gradually and significantly with each young person over the last year. Appropriate techniques are employed by staff to ensure young people are safely held and post event analysis of incidents allows staff to learn how to improve interventions to aid young people to control their behaviour.

Young people's safety in the home is ensured by the regular testing of electrical and fire equipment. Health and safety guidelines are followed, risk assessments are comprehensive and all children and staff are very knowledgeable about fire evacuation procedures. Young people and staff's safety would benefit from recording all occasions when they have taken part in a fire evacuation and any issues associated with this.

Leadership and management

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

The Registered Manager is well liked by the young people and staff giving clear guidance and setting clear expectations to both groups. Young people benefit from the environment created which puts their interests and well being central to the operation of the home. They benefit from excellently maintained care plans which they are encouraged to contribute to and staff are clear about implementing agreed programmes and achieving agreed outcomes and targets with young people.

The Registered Manager ensures that the home fulfils its objectives as outlined in the Statement of Purpose and in the young people's guide. Young people's safety and the quality of care is enhanced by the excellent monitoring and evaluation of practice in line with Regulations 33 and 34. The manager uses this information to great effect in advising changes to individual or group practice.

Young people are able to effectively participate in all aspects of their care, education, therapy and health care due to the support from well trained, regularly supervised staff. Staff are clear about their roles and their career development aided by annual appraisal, clear procedures and access to appropriate training in line with national standards enhances the service provided to the young people.

Young people have benefitted from the Registered Manager's robust addressing of recommendations from previous inspections improving the quality of care and safety

for them. Some issues are the responsibility of the responsible individual and these have not been fully met in particular explaining how decisions in the recruitment process are arrived at and this has led to recommendations about recruitment being put in place again. Checks have been followed as asked for to safeguard young people and there is evidence of more robust checking of staff references and background, enhancing the safe selection of staff but greater clarity in how decisions are made is required.

Young people are engaged in a range of community based activities which they enjoy and benefit their social development. The home however does not enjoy good relations with all of its neighbours and some regular complaints have been made to the local council about perceived disruption from the home. The young people's safety has been paramount to the home and appropriate measures are in place to minimise any disruption to the local community but this is not communicated well to all relevant parties. To ensure a safe environment for the young people it would be beneficial for the home to address this.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.