

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Monica Hargreaves
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The children's home is owned and operated by a local authority. It is registered to provide care and accommodation for six young people who experience behavioural and emotional difficulties.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Good progress	The children's home has demonstrated continued improvement in quality of care and outcomes for children and young people and where appropriate has addressed all requirements and the large majority of recommendations that were raised at the previous inspection.
Satisfactory progress	The children's home has maintained quality of care and outcomes for children and young people and where appropriate has addressed all requirements and the majority of recommendations that were raised at the previous inspection.
Inadequate progress	The children's home has failed to address one or more requirements and/or has not met the majority of recommendations and/or the quality of care and outcomes for children and young people have declined since the last full inspection.

Progress

Since their previous inspection the service is judged to be making **satisfactory progress**.

At the last inspection in May 2012, the overall effectiveness of the home was judged to be inadequate. Since that inspection, the home has made satisfactory progress overall. A number of requirements and recommendations were made at the last inspection. These have been met and as a result, the quality of care for young people living in the home has improved. This is confirmed by care staff who say that the home is much more settled and young people themselves who report that the home is a 'better place to live'.

The Statement of Purpose has been reviewed and updated and accurately reflects how young people are cared for. The provider and manager have taken action to ensure that all young people in the home are appropriately placed and that staff can meet their individual needs. This ensures that all young people are able to make progress and promotes the smooth running of the home.

All risk assessments have been reviewed and updated to ensure that they protect young people and remain relevant to their needs. The provider has taken action to

ensure that young people are protected from bullying. In the first instance, this has been achieved by ensuring that all young people are appropriately placed and their needs can be safely met. In addition, the risk of bullying identified in individual assessments and plans so that staff monitor and supervise young people appropriately. Young people say that there is no bullying in the home and they report that they feel safe.

The manager has ensured that the arrangements for protecting young people from the risk of going missing from the home have been strengthened. Concerns are identified in individual risk assessments and plans and specific strategies are put in place in order to protect young people if they do go missing. There is close liaison with the police and social workers generally and additional discussions with these key professionals take place if a young person goes missing. The manager and staff have a good knowledge of the locally agreed protocol regarding unauthorised absences and young people missing from care. All incidents are reported and managed appropriately in order to secure the safe return of the young person.

Young people have detailed placement plans that identify how their day-to-day and longer-term care needs are to be met. These plans address every aspect of a young person's needs, including those that arise from their culture or religion. Since the last inspection, all young people's plans have been reviewed to ensure that they are up to date and accurately reflect their progress and their ongoing needs. Young people reported that staff talk to them about their placement plans, but they did not appear to be fully aware of the detail.

The good health of young people is promoted. Their health needs are identified in their placement plans and the manager has taken action to ensure that all young people are registered with primary health care services. Young people are supported to attend all routine health appointments. Consequently, their health is monitored. Care staff have had training in drugs awareness and the home has developed good links with the local substance misuse teams. Workers from this team have visited the home and had discussions with young people about the risks attached to smoking and using substances. As a result of the work that has been done with young people, there has been a reduction in their use of substances. This has a positive impact on the health outcomes for young people.

Young people are encouraged to make their views known about the individual plans for their care as well as the running of the home. They have regular key work sessions, weekly house meetings and informal discussions with staff. Staff have a good understanding of the young people they look after. Young people are respected as individuals. They have positive relationships with staff which enables them to feel comfortable in their home and consequently supports their progress. One young person said 'I can really talk to (name). He really bothers.'

Staff encourage young people to identify specific activities that they are interested in. Resources are made available to ensure that young people are able to pursue their individual interests in order to broaden their experiences and promote their general development. Young people currently living in the home take part in various

activities, such as trips out to theme parks and other leisure facilities, playing football and pool and visits to the cinema. Two young people have a membership at a local gym. One young person has identified an interest in martial arts and staff are working to secure an appropriate resource locally to allow them to pursue this.

Young people are supported to gain independence skills in order to help them to prepare for adult life. Staff work through independence programmes with young people to help them to consider the skills they have and those they need to acquire. At the time of this inspection, all young people had a clear pathway plan in place. Pathway plans address every aspect of the young person's needs, including arrangements for their education, training and work. All young people have an identified college placement and have aspirations for their future. Pathway plans are discussed and agreed with young people, so that they have the opportunity to make their views known. Young people also have an identified leaving care worker to support them before and after they leave care. This promotes consistency for young people at a time of transition.

Staff develop a positive handling plan for each young person. These identify how staff are working with young people to support them to behave in socially acceptable ways. Staff are trained to manage challenging behaviour in a positive way. Physical intervention is only ever used as a last resort in order to keep young people and staff safe. The manager has reviewed the sanctions that are given to young people and has made changes to these to ensure that they are appropriate. Records are kept of all sanctions and the manager reviews these regularly to monitor their effectiveness.

Since the last inspection, staff have had further training to maintain and enhance their knowledge and skills and to support them in their care of young people. This has included training in conflict resolution, attachment and loss, supporting young people from violent homes and active engagement with young people. The manager has undertaken training regarding the protection of young people who may be exploited and has arranged for this type of training to be made available to all care staff.

The manager has established a system for monitoring the work of the home which meets the requirements of the regulations. These arrangements include provision for consultation with young people and their relatives. Reports of monthly checks are sent to senior managers in the organisation, but the manager has not yet sent a copy of these reports to Ofsted. An independent person visits the home every month to make checks on the quality of the service. In addition to discussions with staff and young people, the visitor has made arrangements for consultation with relatives to ensure that their views about care in the home are also captured. The manager addresses any shortfall that is identified as a result of these checks in order to improve the quality of care that is given to young people.

The manager has a good understanding of the issues that should be notified to relevant authorities and has taken action to ensure that all the required incidents are notified to Ofsted.

Young people live in a safe, comfortable, homely environment. The provider has undertaken a programme of refurbishment and redecoration in the home since the last inspection. At the time of this visit, the home was well maintained, clean and tidy. Young people reported that they had enjoyed helping to choose the decorations and some young people helped to decorate their own rooms. This has supported young people to develop a sense of pride in their home and encouraged them to respect their environment. Apart from young people's bedrooms, no areas of the home are routinely locked. This means that young people have access to all areas of their home. One young person said that these improvements had made the home 'much better'.

Three new recommendations have been made as a result of this inspection. These relate to the need to ensure that all young people have a clear understanding of the detail of their placement plan, the completion of staff training in child exploitation and the need for the manager to submit a copy of the report of his monitoring checks to Ofsted.

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 all staff have updated training in sexual exploitation (NMS 18.1)
- ensure that copies of the manager's monitoring reports are submitted to Ofsted (NMS 21.9)
- ensure that all young people have a clear understanding of the detail of their placement plan. (NMS 25.1)

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 progress made by the provider since the last full inspection, identifies any further strengths, any areas for improvement and makes judgements as outlined in the *Inspection of children's homes – framework for inspection (March 2011)*.