

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Mark Kersh
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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 privately owned and provides care and accommodation for one young person with emotional or behavioural difficulties of either sex aged between 11 and 17 years.

Overall effectiveness

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

Young people live in a safe, caring and supportive home environment that enables them to make excellent progress in all aspects of their lives. Young people are currently achieving some outstanding outcomes in their confidence and emotional resilience, education, healthy lifestyles, personal safety and talents.

Young people feel safe and protected from significant harm. Young people are extremely positive about the quality of care and the support they receive from the staff. This is reflected in the strong and positive relationships and trust that exist between young people and staff and the constructive ways they tackle any problems together.

Young people take an active role in their own care planning and enjoy being at the home. The high level of qualified, dedicated and motivated staff is a strength within the home, as this positively supports the care of young people. Young people benefit from creative and innovative staff who embrace their culture thus forming respectful and meaningful relationships. Young people are taught to develop socially acceptable behaviour and staff work consistently to enable them to develop their skills, to reach their full potential and to get the best out of life.

The organisation and the manager routinely monitors the quality of young people's care. They understand the home's strengths and they take action to rectify any identified weakness to promote the smooth operation of the home.

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people truly benefit from individualised support which has helped them grow in confidence. This has enabled young people to make progress in all aspects of their care. Young people are making excellent progress in developing emotional resilience and they are growing in confidence and maturity. Young people are developing a greater understanding of their experiences and talk openly with staff about their feelings and frustrations.

Young people enjoy healthy lifestyles and are always encouraged to take an active interest and responsibility in looking after their own physical and emotional health, appropriate to their age and understanding. Young people's opportunities for access to health services and support from professional health workers are excellent.

Young people above school age have made very good progress with their education. They have further opportunities to develop their knowledge through projects and college placements. Young people are clear of the wider world and are involved in charity projects for disadvantaged children. They represent children who are looked after in forum meetings to raise awareness and discuss issues. Young people understand the importance of learning and are making excellent choices about how to develop their skills and abilities through education.

Young people benefit from appropriate contact with people important to them in their lives. Staff work really hard to ensure that young people find seeing their families, is a safe, positive and enjoyable experience. This includes having family members stay overnight at the home, and is consistent with responsible parenting. Also, staff are very aware that young people may find seeing their family stressful and make sure young people are suitably and sensitively supported.

Young people are being well-prepared to become more independent and make a successful transition into adult life appropriate to their age and level of understanding. Young people are routinely involved in the running of the home including shopping, cooking, tidying and managing money, and encouraged to take more responsibility for themselves. The support from staff and the input from young people ensure they have all the necessary information and understanding of services they may need when living independently. This has been formulated into an independence pack and will serve young people well when they move on from this home.

Quality of care

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

Young people make excellent progress in a stable, nurturing and supportive environment. They feel very settled and have a strong sense of belonging. Staff are extremely effective at building positive relationships with young people and as a result they are able to sort out any problems constructively. Young people have strong and trusting relationships with staff, feel valued and know staff accept them as individuals. A young person said 'The thing I like about my home is that there is always someone here for me to talk to and I have people that actually care about me.'

Young people have regular access to services which enables them to have their voices heard and influence the running of the home. Young people know how to complain and are given information in their welcome pack and have several avenues to talk to someone if they were unhappy. This affords young people to raise concerns without having to approach staff. However, young people say they trust staff to act in their best interests and that staff go the extra mile to solve any issues that arise.

Staff plan for young people's care and accommodation exceedingly well. The objective of young people's time at the home is clearly outlined to show what young people and staff are working towards. Young people's placement plans provide a comprehensive picture of their personal needs and the support young people require. Staff put young people's plans into practice effectively to ensure young people's specific needs are met daily. The care planning and staff's day-to-day practice recognises young people as individuals with different needs, backgrounds, interests and views. Staff have an excellent knowledge of the young people they are working with ensuring all their needs are consistently met, including ensuring that young people have access to the right support services.

Young people's placements are reviewed regularly to make sure they reflect any changes and continue to meet their needs. Staff work closely with young people and outside agencies involved in their lives to monitor their progress. Staff take into account any changes in young people's lives, and identify the best way to support them. Young people are fully involved in the review of their plans by attending meetings and having their views about their future and transition into adulthood taken into account.

Young people live in a healthy environment that actively promotes their physical health and emotional well-being. They are fully supported to develop healthy lifestyles. Staff understand the importance of a well-balanced diet and ensure young people enjoy healthy and nutritious homemade meals. There is excellent monitoring and support available to young people to meet their specific health needs. Young people are actively involved in choosing meals they like, shopping for ingredients and cooking. The food fully meets young people's specific dietary needs and cultural background.

Staff have created a stimulating environment that promotes and encourages young people's education, which develops young people's confidence in their abilities and skills, and supports educational achievement.

Young people pursue their particular interests and are engaged in purposeful and enjoyable activities at the home and in the community. The home also includes young people's friends in activities and provides the funds so that young people can be more confident and maintain appropriate relationships with people important to them.

Staff ensure young people receive an individual service designed to meet their personal needs, cultural background, and personal identity, including gender, faith, disability and sexual orientation. Staff have an excellent knowledge of the young people they are working with ensuring all their needs are consistently monitored and met.

Young people live in a home that is tastefully decorated with ample space to meet their needs. Young people have their own bedrooms, which are personalised, reflect their interests and contain meaningful mementoes. The home has a relaxed atmosphere and young people say they are very happy living here. The home is in a residential area and the property blends into the neighbourhood, resembling a residential family home.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

The systems in place to promote the safety and welfare of young people are comprehensive. Young people feel safe and protected in the home. They can talk openly about any worries or concerns and they feel that staff listen well and care about their welfare. Staff give young people's safety the highest priority and they are very well trained in safeguarding. They are able to recognise the signs and symptoms of abuse and know exactly what they need to do to protect young people. Staff provide young people with excellent advice about personal safety and encourage young people to let them know when they have worries or if they are unhappy.

Staff are very aware of young people's vulnerability and the risks they face in the community, including exploitation and discrimination. They use clear and detailed risk assessments and management plans effectively to protect young people from harm. Staff successfully balance the need for protection with enabling young people to take reasonable risks as part of their growth and development. As a result, young people are able to enjoy the same social experiences as other young people the same age, such as spending time with friends.

There are very few issues with young people going missing as young people's whereabouts are agreed and known by staff. There are no issues of bullying and young people are actively protected from bullying, intimidation and harassment, to promote their welfare and safety.

Young people are assisted to develop socially acceptable behaviour through encouragement, positive regard and a reward system. Sanctions imposed for inappropriate behaviour are very rare and young people say that when they are sanctioned for unacceptable behaviour that they can always earn their loss back. They say this is a better way as it gives them time to think and by earning their sanction back makes them more responsible for their behaviour. Staff are trained and have guidance in physical intervention but due to the systems of positive regard in place, restraints are never used.

There are safe recruitment practices within this home. This means suitably cleared staff care for young people. There have been no new appointments since the last inspection; however, some staff have left. The operational manager has deployed staff from other homes within the organisation, the young person is familiar with these people. Staff appropriately monitor any visitors to the home and maintain a visitors' book.

The home provides young people with a safe place to live. Young people's welfare and safety is at the centre of the home's practice. The home is kept free from potential hazards. Gas and electrical appliances are tested within the recommended timescales for their safety. Fire fighting equipment is regularly serviced and fire drills are held frequently to make sure that young people and staff know how to evacuate the home safely, in accordance with the home's emergency evacuation procedures.

Leadership and management

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

One recommendation from the previous inspection has been complied with. There is a clear plan for the transition of young people into adulthood outlining the responsible people who support young people to achieve this. Young people live in a home that is effectively and efficiently managed in their best interests. The home meets the aims and objectives of its Statement of Purpose, and young people and social workers are clear about the services and support the home provides.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Staff understand young people's individual strengths and needs. Working practices are consistent in enabling young people to develop both physically and emotionally, in increasing their self-esteem and in helping them to achieve their potential. Young people are supported to learn new skills and to participate in how the home is run. Staff are committed to challenging anti-discriminatory practice and have attended equality and diversity training.

Staff are very well supported by the manager. They have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities, and the high expectations for providing excellent practice. They confirm that when they need support and guidance, the manager is always available and helpful and they receive supervision regularly. In addition, team meetings take place every month, and young people's participation in these is evident in the records kept by the home.

Young people are looked after by a highly competent staff team who have a wide range of skills and experiences. Staff have a relevant qualification in working with young people. The skills within the team match the needs of young people living in the home very well. The numbers of staff on duty are sufficient to meet the needs of young people. This includes the support they need for activities, visits and attending appointments. Staff have access to a comprehensive training programme that covers the needs of young people and provides staff with up to date new legislation and practice developments to effectively enable them to carry out their roles.

The manager and staff clearly demonstrate a strong commitment to delivering exceptional practices tailored to the individual and personal needs of the young people they look after. The effectiveness of this approach is evident in the excellent progress young people have made since their starting point in the home. The home has a written development plan in place, which is used very effectively to identify areas for potential development.

Young people benefit from effective management. There are various systems in place to monitor the quality of care which includes monthly visits by a designated person. A report following each visit enables the manager to take positive action to improve performance, where necessary.

The home's written records are securely stored and provide a comprehensive picture of individual young people's experiences, needs, development and progress. Young people's records contain up-to-date information about them, including the relevant documents from placing authorities.

Equality and diversity practice is **outstanding**.