

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Linda Brown
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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

This children's home is privately owned and registered for four children with emotional and behavioural difficulties or learning disabilities.

Overall effectiveness

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

This home provides an outstanding quality of care with excellent outcomes for young people. Young people benefit from a well managed, committed, enthusiastic and well trained staff team who put young people at the heart of all they do. There is a calm and relaxed atmosphere at the home, behaviour is managed well and excellent relationships are formed between staff and young people. Young people take an active role in the decisions being made about their care planning and the day-to-day living at the home. There are good systems in place for preparing young people for independence. Education is fully supported and achievements are celebrated. Young people are encouraged to develop positive relationships with their families and significant adults in their lives. The management team make good use of the robust monitoring system in place to continually develop and improve the care provided to the young people. Although care plans are completed, they are not always up-to-date and accurate.

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 each child's placement plan is monitored by a key worker within the home who ensures that the requirements of the plan are implemented in the day-to-day care of the child, with particular regard to ensuring that information is up to date and accurate. (NMS 25.2)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people thrive within this caring and supportive environment. Staff support young people to have a good understanding of their background and develop self-confidence and skills are at the heart of their work. Achievement is encouraged,

success is rewarded consistently and young people respond positively to this approach.

Young people are starting to lead healthier lifestyles. Staff continue to encourage young people to attend their medical appointments and are not deterred by any resilience shown by young people and offer any support and advice required. For example, providing transport and accompanying them if appropriate, the result of which has proved to be very successful. Young people who have continually refused to attend appointments are now beginning to have their health needs addressed. The looked after children's nurse is a regular visitor to the home and offers advice and guidance on a range of areas, such as, smoking, illegal substances and sexual health. This excellent practice ensures that the health needs of children and young people are identified, supported and addressed.

All young people attend an educational placement. Staff are committed to supporting the young people's education and liaise regularly with schools and education placements to ensure that positive outcomes are achieved.

Young people benefit from appropriate contact with family, friends and other people who are important to them. Contact arrangements are discussed at the time of admission and are reviewed regularly. Staff work in partnership with parents, families or significant adults in order to provide care that meets the needs of their child. Parents and families are regular visitors to the home. Any restrictions are clearly detailed on young people's files.

Young people have the appropriate skills when it is time for them to move on. Staff provide excellent support to prepare young people for the transition into adult life. Independence tasks are completed by all young people providing a gradual progression into planning for moving on to a semi-independent programme. Pathway plans are then completed for young people who are approaching adulthood.

Quality of care

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

Young people benefit from the excellent relationship they have with the staff team. The interaction between staff and young people is calm and relaxed. There is plenty of laughter and good natured joking between staff and young people in addition to the clear respect that is shown on both sides. Young people speak really positively about the relationships they have with staff who form strong, positive and constructive relationships with the young people. Young people benefit greatly from a diverse staff team who provide them with individual support in order to develop confidence and a positive view of themselves. Key workers have an excellent knowledge of the background and individual needs of the young people and actively promote their confidence and understanding.

Staff are able to demonstrate a detailed knowledge and understanding of the young people they care for. This includes their cultural, religious, dietary or any special

needs. This knowledge enables staff to understand the moods and behaviours of young people and adapt the care they provide to meet individual needs. Strategies are in place to promote positive behaviour and staff are consistent in their implementation resulting in a significant improvement in the behaviour displayed by the young people. This means that young people are supported and encouraged to develop positive and constructive relationships and behave appropriately.

Young people confirm that they have the opportunity to regularly discuss their thoughts, views and wishes. They are able to give several examples about how their opinions are sought. They stated that regular young people's meetings are held, they fill in lots of questionnaires, have regular sessions with their key worker, attend their reviews and meetings and, in addition, staff are always available to discuss any ideas or concerns. Young people explained the role of the children's advocate who is available to support them in meetings or represent them if they feel that their views are not being heard. The management and staff also confirm this commitment to involve young people in the decisions being made regarding all aspects of their lives from day-to-day living to long term planning.

Information is provided to young people at the time of admission and, in addition, staff spend time with young people explaining the rules, routines and systems at the home to include the complaints process. Young people are fully aware of the complaint system in place and are confident that they are able to tell staff or management if they are unhappy about anyone or anything. They strongly believe that their concern or complaint will be taken seriously and acted upon. Young people stated that the manager writes to them with the outcome of any complaint and spends time with them discussing the outcome to ensure that they are happy and understand the decisions being made. They are fully aware of the role of the independent advocate if they required further support. These excellent systems ensure that young people are provided with the appropriate information and are confident they will be listened to and action will be taken to address any concerns which they may have.

The Registered Manager and staff team are keen to promote the benefits of education for young people. Good links are in place with the education services to ensure that places are secured for young people in mainstream school, college and alternative educational placements. All young people living at the home have an education provision and staff actively encourage young people to attend their placements and support them when they are having difficulties. Personal education plans are reviewed and updated regularly. Young people speak positively about their placements and the aspirations they have for their futures. This excellent support means that from the start of their placement young people are provided with the opportunities and support to make significant progress and to achieve their full potential.

There is a clear commitment to promoting the health needs of young people. Detailed health needs are identified within the placement plans and in addition to routine medicals, a range of specialist services are also available. For example access to the looked after children's nurse, the children and adolescent mental health

service (CAMHS) and the youth offending team (YOT). Staff are trained in first aid and the safe administration of medicines. Medicines are appropriately stored, administered and disposed of. Young people have the opportunity to self-administer providing the appropriate risk assessment is in place. Lockable facilities are available for young people who self-administer. Appropriate consents are available on young people's files. Young people are protected and supported to develop their independence skills in a safe and controlled way.

Placement plans are completed at the time of admission and are regularly updated and reviewed. Young people confirm that they take an active role in the completion of their plans which include any additional services and support that arise out of a young person's disability, ethnicity, race, sexuality, faith or belief. Plans provide staff with clear guidance regarding how to care for young people and how their needs will be met. Staff respect and value equality and diversity and this is shown throughout the young people's placement plans; their individual needs are identified and addressed. Management ensure that staff are informed of any changes and in general these are clearly recorded on plans. One plan examined showed several changes had not been written on the plan and some very recent information missing. This information is reflected in other documents, the acting manager confirmed that a new plan is in the process of being completed.

Pathway plans are in place for young people who are planning for transition into adulthood. Young people are able to clearly explain the expectations for them to budget, cook, shop, wash and clean their rooms when they are on an independence programme. Young people speak positively about the support they get from staff and how their confidence has grown regarding planning and preparing for independence.

The home is located close to a busy multi-cultural city. This enables young people to have access to a range of leisure facilities, places of worship and good transport networks. Staff actively encourage purposeful and enjoyable activities for young people, who participate in a range of activities that cater for their individual needs. Young people talk with enthusiasm about the activities they are involved in and the individual holidays they have planned to Devon and Ireland. Staff have a good understanding of the individual interests of the young people and work with them to ensure that they are given the opportunities to pursue their hobbies. There is a games room at the home and young people spend time with staff playing table tennis and other games. Pictures and displays are available in the games room of cultural and themed nights that are regularly held at the home. Pictures of outings and achievements of young people that are usually displayed in this room, however, they are in the process of being updated with new pictures. Notice boards provide young people with a range of information such as, complaints, health issues and anti-bullying information.

The home is clean and tidy and provides young people with a comfortable and homely environment. The home is in the process of being redecorated, Young people take an active role in the choices and colours of both the communal rooms and their individual bedrooms. One young person stated that they had gone shopping with staff and chosen the new red crockery to match the newly decorated dining room.

Young people stated that they are encouraged to personalise their rooms, as part of the admission process they visit the home and staff ask them what they would like. They are all given an allowance to go shopping for personal items that they are able to take with them when they move on. Young people speak positively about this system and the improvements that have been made to the home. This ensures that young people are provided with a home that is appropriately located, designed and maintained.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

There are excellent systems in place to ensure that young people are safe and feel safe. All staff receive safeguarding training and have an excellent awareness of the safeguarding procedures and a knowledge and understanding of the implementation of these procedures in their day-to-day work. Staff actively encourage young people to keep themselves safe when out in the community. The acting manager monitors the training closely to ensure that staff knowledge is regularly updated and refreshed. Young people clearly state that they feel safe at the home and are confident that they can talk to someone if they are unhappy about anything or anyone. Staff demonstrate a good understanding of the need to protect young people. Good relationships are formed with a range of professionals, such as, police, health workers, social workers, CAMHS and YOT to offer a package of support in order to keep young people safe.

Staff demonstrate a good understanding and knowledge of the young people in their care. They are aware of the risks, vulnerability, timescales and guidance in place for reporting individuals missing. The management and staff are working closely with young people, families and professionals to address some of the issues. There is clearly progress being made. The acting manager is closely monitoring the reduction of incidents through her monthly checks. Staff and management are aware of the new guidance regarding the runaway and missing from care protocols.

There have been no incidents of bullying reported at the home. At the time of a referral the compatibility of all the young people is carefully considered and this, in conjunction with staff awareness, provides young people with an environment that significantly reduces the risk of bullying. All incidents or concerns are notified to the appropriate professionals. This means that young people are protected and are cared for by staff who understand their vulnerability and whose knowledge is up to date and relevant.

Staff are trained and show a good understanding of the behaviour management plan and risk assessments which provide excellent guidance for managing difficult and challenge behaviours. The calm and relaxed atmosphere at the home combined with staff knowledge and understanding of young people moods and behaviours enables staff to defuse situations and support young people to learn strategies to manage their behaviour. As a result, the use of physical intervention is very rare. Appropriate

records are maintained in the event of a physical intervention and young people are provided with an opportunity to express their views and feelings after the incident has taken place. Young people demonstrate a good understanding of the rules and state that the rules are fair and have a good understanding of the consequences to their actions. They are also motivated to achieve their individual incentive rewards which encourage and promote positive behaviour.

Young people's protection is further supported by good health and safety routines and robust recruitment practice. Recruitment is completed in line with the organisation's recruitment and selection process. The acting manager and newly appointed staff are able to explain the process involved. Ofsted have planned to complete a full inspection of recruitment records in September 2011. Visitors sign in and are checked on arrival and where appropriate identification is required.

Regular fire tests and drills take place and equipment is checked and serviced within the required timescales. Young people are aware of the fire procedures and visitors are briefed on the evacuation procedure when they arrive.

Leadership and management

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

Young people benefit from living in a home that is exceptionally well managed. The Register Manager is currently having some planned time away from work and in her absence a temporary acting manager has been very recently appointed. The change of manager has been very well handled. The acting manager spent time at the home prior to the Registered Manager's departure to enable her to meet the staff and young people and get an understanding of how the home is run. This has resulted in a very smooth transition of management. Staff and young people speak exceptionally highly of the acting manager and the support that she provides. She has already made changes to the environment and has plans to further improve and develop the service. This is being completed with sensitivity and respect for the Registered Manager. The acting manager ensures that she keeps up to date with the latest guidance and legislation, for example, the new inspection framework has already been implemented into the policies and procedures, ensuring that staff have an understanding of the new national minimum standards and the changes to the inspection system. This ensures that staff are kept up to date with professional and legal developments.

The acting manager is keen to continually develop the service delivered to young people by improving the knowledge and skills of both herself and the staff team. She speaks positively regarding the support and guidance she receives from the provider. She feels that the provider has given her the training, encouragement and opportunity to develop her knowledge and skills. Staff also confirm this commitment from the organisation to ensure that they are appropriately trained and supported and state that there is a wide range of training available to them. Newly appointed staff complete their mandatory training prior to starting work with the young people and then move on to complete the Children's Workforce Development Council

induction programme. They speak very positively regarding the induction and training process and the support and guidance they have received. This means that young people are cared for by staff who are committed to regularly attend training to update and improve their knowledge and practice.

There is a consistent staff team who provide a good balance in terms of ethnicity, gender and age. Staff work well as a team, they have the support of their colleagues and feel extremely well supported by the acting manager who they find to be both approachable and accessible for guidance and support. Team meetings and supervisions are held regularly and give staff the opportunities to discuss any concerns in an open and professional way. This practice allows them to develop their practice to provide a consistent and effective service to young people

There are very good systems in place to monitor the daily lives of the young people currently living in the home. Detailed and thorough Regulation 33 visits are undertaken monthly to monitor the overall care and welfare of the young people. The acting manager responds immediately to any actions raised from these visits. Regulation 34 checks are completed by the Registered Manager. The acting manager is undertaking this process and has identified areas of improvement from previous reports. Reports are completed monthly and clearly identify any shortfalls or patterns and trends. In addition, the home regularly sends questionnaires to families and professionals to enable them to develop the service they provide. Questionnaires received at Ofsted from young people speak positively about the care they receive from the staff at the home.

Equality and diversity practice is **outstanding**.