

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 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)*.

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.

Service information

Brief description of the service

The home is one of a group of homes operated by the same organisation as part of a tendering contract with a local council. This home provides care and accommodation for up to five young people of either gender aged between 13 to 17 years on admission.

Progress

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

At the last inspection in November 2011 the overall quality rating for the service was judged as outstanding and no requirements or recommendations were set. Young people continue to benefit from a good quality of care. The management and staff demonstrate a commitment to the development of the service. Good progress is being made to improve the quality of the care delivered to the young people and, as a result, the outcomes for young people continue to improve.

A strength of this home continues to be the stable, enthusiastic and experienced staff team who are totally committed to providing a nurturing and caring environment where young people can thrive. Staff continue to have strong relationships with a range of professionals who provide a support service for the young people. Regular positive feedback is received from professionals. For example, they noted the relaxed atmosphere and excellent support from staff who are informative and helpful and that they are always made to feel very welcome and part of the extended team.

Young people benefit from a home that is well maintained, homely and comfortable. Several changes have been made to improve the décor of the home. Young people have taken an active role in the choices and colour schemes for both communal rooms and their bedrooms. Redecoration has taken place in the dining room, lounge and some of the young people's bedrooms. Due to requests from young people, plans are also in place to look at improving other areas of the home, such as the boy's bathroom area. One young person commented, 'it's like home but without your mum and dad.'

Good systems remain in place and are regularly reviewed and improved to ensure that young people feel safe and are safe. Since the previous inspection there have been changes to the young people who are being accommodated. The manager and staff have worked hard to settle in the new young people while minimising any disruption to the young people already living at the home. For a short period of time there was a rise in missing persons and unauthorised absences. However, the management and staff, along with other agencies, such as the child sexual exploitation worker, base 25 support service and the vulnerable persons' police

officer, have worked in partnership with young people. As a result, there has been a significant reduction in the number of incidents and the risks to young people.

Young people confirm that they are happy at the home and it is evident that they have formed good relationships with the majority of staff. Young people are able to tell someone if they are unhappy about anything or anyone. Concerns raised by young people are immediately addressed. Young people also have regular contact with the young people's advocate, providing them with the opportunity to raise any concerns with someone independent of the home.

Several areas of development have taken place since the previous inspection, with particular regard to preparing young people for independence. The manager is keen to develop further the current system to ensure that all young people are provided with individual packages that prepare them for independence at a level and pace that they can maintain. A colourful, child-friendly cookery book has been developed for all young people who are working towards independence. Meals are easy to prepare and will provide a young person with a cost-effective, nutritional meal while developing their individual skills. It is very important to the ethos of the home that young people working on independence still have the opportunity to eat some of their meals with the main group, as meal times are social occasions for both staff and young people. This individual approach to independence provides young people with a tailored package for a smooth transition into adulthood.

A commitment to providing young people with education is ongoing. All young people of school age have educational placements although, at times, young people choose not to attend. Staff are not deterred; they are able to demonstrate a good understanding of the issues that at times prevent young people from engaging with education. They are creative when working with young people to encourage them to engage. In order to create a better understanding about a young person's life at school, detailed and informative folders that cover a 'year in my school life' have been introduced. Staff and young people have enjoyed completing this work together. It has provided young people with an opportunity to discuss the issues, as well as the achievements, that they have had at school. Staff continue to work closely with schools and education providers to support these placements. As a result, improvements are being made to the level of attendance being achieved.

Staff speak with enthusiasm regarding the apprenticeships that are now available for young people who have left school. This is a new incentive where young people are given the opportunity to earn money, gain a qualification and, if successful, are offered a job at the end. Staff state that young people who have started the apprenticeships are really enjoying the work. The remaining young people who are awaiting their imminent start date are very keen to engage with this scheme.

Young people benefit from being cared for by staff who are provided with the knowledge and skills to care for their individual needs. Ongoing training has taken place since the previous inspection in several areas, such as safeguarding, child exploitation, missing persons and anti-bullying. The manager is also involved in the quality assurance development group.

Effective internal and external monitoring systems review the quality of care that children receive and identify areas where outcomes for young people may be improved. Extremely detailed reports of monitoring visits are produced which demonstrate that an excellent level of consultation with staff and young people takes place on a regular basis. Development plans are completed and evidence is available to show that several areas identified in the plan have already been implemented. For example, this includes staff training and requests for home improvements. Plans are completed annually and targets are set to ensure the ongoing development of the service. Regular feedback from young people, their families, social workers and visiting professionals is received and the manager closely monitors this feedback to develop and improve the service. Feedback received from young people is very positive. One young person wrote a poem about the staff saying, 'I was scared when I first came but you hit me with your special touch.' Several young people who have now moved on from the home come back to visit. One young person wrote, 'I love coming back; I loved living at the home.'