

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

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.

Overall effectiveness

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

This home provides an outstanding quality of care to the young people it accommodates. Young people benefit from living in a home that is well managed and with staff who are enthusiastic, experienced, supported and well trained. The management and staff are totally committed to putting the best interests of the young people at the heart of their work enabling them to provide outstanding care and support. Young people are given the opportunities to develop and progress while living at this home. Education is valued, behaviour is well managed and there are excellent relationships formed between the staff and young people.

The promotion of equality and diversity is an outstanding feature of this service. Young people are consistently rewarded for their individual achievements and development. They are treated with a high level of respect and every effort is made to ensure their individual needs, wishes, feelings and views are heard and included in the running of the service. Safeguarding is promoted and through working in partnership with other agencies and families some young people's safety and welfare needs have significantly improved since staying at the home. Young people are supported and encouraged to develop their independence skills in order to enable them to have a smooth transition into adulthood. Robust and detailed monitoring systems identify patterns and trends and the management use this monitoring to actively address shortfalls and develop the service. This child-focused service creates a caring and nurturing environment for young people to develop and flourish.

No requirements or recommendations are made as a result of this inspection.

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people benefit from excellent relationships with staff which has enabled them to develop a positive self view: emotional resilience: an understanding of their background and confidence in their skills. One young person stated 'the staff trust me and so I respect them'.

Staff work closely and creatively with a range of support services to ensure that all aspects of the young people's individual health needs are addressed and met. Health professionals, such as, the looked after nurse are regular visitors to the home spending time and getting to know the young people. This practice has proved to be extremely successful providing young people with a personal service and giving them the confidence to discuss any concerns they may have and guide and support them to address any health issues.

Young people benefit from a staff team who are totally committed to providing the appropriate education provision for young people. Staff are not deterred by any resistance shown by education providers or young people and continually strive to engage and support young people to achieve. This commitment has proved to be extremely successful. Young people who refused to attend or had very limited education at the start of their placements are now engaging in alternative education placements, college or work.

Excellent outcomes are achieved which ensure that young people benefit from appropriate contact with family, friends and other significant people in their lives. Staff work closely with families to develop trust and facilitate contact for young people. For example, several families who were initially reluctant to engage with the staff now contact or visit the home regularly.

Young people speak confidently regarding the preparation for transition into adulthood. A detailed independence programme is completed in line with a young person's age and ability. One young person stated 'staff have taught me everything: to cook; budget and even paint and decorate my flat. I am ready to move out now'. This means that young people are being very well prepared for a smooth transition into adulthood.

Quality of care

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

Young people speak very positively regarding the relationship they have with the staff. Several young people stated that the staff team are 'the best'. It is evident that there is a mutual respect between staff and young people and the mood is calm caring, light hearted and jovial. The Registered Manager describes her staff team as 'joyful and nurturing'. There is a strong emphasis on building relationships and trust between staff and young people. This practice has clearly provided a nurturing and caring approach where young people thrive.

There are excellent systems in place to ensure that young people are given the opportunity to express their views and wishes in all aspects of their lives. Consultation with the young people is embedded in the ethos of the home. In addition to the formal consultation via meetings, monthly questionnaires and planning sessions, informal discussions take place on a regular basis. Young people strongly believe that their views and opinions are listened to and acted upon and are able to give several examples of the changes that have been made. For example, the

décor of the home and changes to individual plans.

There is a robust complaints system in place. Information is displayed in the games room for young people to freely access if they wish to make a complaint. In addition, an independent visitor regularly frequents the home. Young people confirm they are fully aware of how to make a complaint, however, they do not feel that they have any need to complain. Young people are, however, confident that should the need arise their complaint would be taken seriously and addressed.

Young people take an active role in the completion and reviewing of their care plans. Young people, social workers, families and staff all contribute to the plan. Plans cover all aspects of a young person's life to include their cultural, religious, dietary, gender, language and sexual orientation needs. Plans also identify the support required to address the identified needs. Young people commented on the outstanding support that they have received with particular regard to cultural, dietary, linguistic and educational needs. Staff understand and know the young people well; they are continually reviewing plans and adapting the care provided to ensure that they are meeting individual requirements. Planning sessions take place monthly where the young people review their plans and set themselves goals to achieve for the following month, such as, to attend the dentist or an education appointment. This excellent practice empowers young people to be fully involved in the decisions being made about their lives.

Several young people are now reaching the age to start the process of transition into adulthood, for these young people detailed independence programmes are completed in conjunction with pathway plans. One young person commented on how prepared they felt for moving, on saying, 'the staff have taught me everything'. Young people also feel confident that they can keep in touch with the staff and visit the home or ask for advice if they need it, even when they have moved out. An after care worker commented on how well the home prepares young people for the transition into independence. This practice provides young people with the best opportunities for a successful transition into adulthood.

Young people benefit from living in an environment where they are encouraged and supported to access the services to ensure that their physical, mental, emotional and psychological health needs are met. In addition to the routine services, a range of specialist support services are also available. For example, drug and sexual health counselling, support groups for gay and lesbian young people and parenting classes. Staff tailor these services to meet individual needs. Where young people find it difficult to attend sessions at external venues the home facilitates the sessions. This ensures that young people are provided with the service and support they need to address any health concerns.

Staff have developed excellent links with education support services such as the looked after children education support and key team which combines services and support to look at appropriate education provisions. The service is also tailored to meet the individual needs of the young people. Several young people have had difficult experiences prior to coming to the home and mainstream education is not

always the appropriate route to engage and motivate them. Staff are not deterred by any resilience shown and are motivated to provide the appropriate provision to ensure that all young people reach their full potential. Young people who, at the point of admission, were reluctant to engage in education now speak with confidence about the courses or work they are undertaking.

Staff go to exceptional lengths to facilitate contact and build relationships between young people their families and other significant people in their lives. Young people give several examples of the support staff have provided, such as, facilitating transport, accommodation, visiting families in the community and encouraging families to visit the home. This practice has resulted in some excellent outcomes for young people who have re-established appropriate contact and resolved issues with their families.

Young people are involved in a range of purposeful and enjoyable activities. Several of the young people are now reaching semi-independence and, therefore, are learning to budget and this includes paid activities. The Registered Manager is determined to set realistic goals for young people so that they will be able to cope once they are living in the community. Group activities do take place but young people are encouraged to pursue individual interests so they will have established their own interests and independence before they move out of the home. Events, such as, birthdays, achievements, Eid, Diwali, Halloween, Christmas and St Patrick's Day are all celebrated. There is a 'wall of fame' in the games room where pictures of young people's achievements are displayed and celebrated. When religious or cultural events are celebrated information is researched and displayed so young people gain an understanding of the cultures and beliefs of others. Traditional meals are then served. Staff and young people speak with enthusiasm about the recent celebration of Eid. One young person wrote on their leaving form that the Eid party and holiday in Devon are the best memories of their time living at the home.

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 feel safe and are safe. Young people are cared for by staff who have the skills to create an environment where young people feel protected and are protected from significant harm. Staff are aware of the significant risks that at times young people can be exposed to. Robust risk management plans are constantly monitored to reduce any identified risk. Staff receive regular training and are able to demonstrate an excellent understanding of the safeguarding procedures and process for reporting an incident. Young people state that there are no issues regarding bullying, however, they are confident that they would tell staff if they are concerned about anything or anyone and staff would take their concerns seriously and address them.

The Registered Manager closely monitors the missing person records and continually tries creative strategies to engage individual young people to ensure their safe return

to the home. For example, a mobile phone was purchased for one young person to enable staff to keep in contact and encourage them to return home. Staff work in conjunction with families and the vulnerable person's police officer and are proactive in searching for young people and targeting adults who harbour them. As a result there has only been one incident during November. Young people acknowledge staff concerns for their welfare, one young person commented, 'I phone the staff if I have missed the bus or I am going to be late so that they know where I am'. The excellent relationships between staff and young people has enabled staff to engage young people in a constructive and positive way, resulting in a significant reduction in the amount of young people going missing. If, however, a situation arises, robust systems are in place to facilitate as far as possible, their prompt and safe return.

Detailed behaviour management systems are in place to encourage and support young people to achieve positive results. Staff and young people complete weekly planners to identify the goals to achieve. All achievements are rewarded. Young people respond positively to this approach. Young people are fully aware of the rules of the house and the consequences if they are broken. Young people are encouraged to write comments when they have been sanctioned. Staff spend time with young people discussing their behaviour and the consequences of their actions. Young people speak with compassion about the staff stating that staff 'go to extreme lengths to calm us down in order to avoid the need to physically intervene'. This ethos is also echoed throughout the staff team. Staff are appropriately trained and skilled in de-escalation techniques, this, combined with their detailed knowledge of the young people they care for, enables them to manage difficult and challenging behaviour very well.

Young people are protected and cared for by staff that are appropriately vetted and checked. Recruitment is completed in line with the organisation's recruitment and selection process. The Registered Manager is able to explain the process involved. Visitors sign in and are checked on arrival and briefed on fire evacuation procedures. Risk assessments, fire checks and equipment checks are maintained and up-to-date. This practice means that young people live in a safe and well maintained environment.

Leadership and management

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

Young people benefit from being cared for by an experienced manager, who is completely child-focused and puts the care and outcomes of the young people at the heart of her work. She is committed to developing the service and took immediate action to address and meet the recommendation from the previous inspection. Development plans are completed for both refurbishments to areas of the home and to the development of the service. For example, redecoration of the games room and development of the independence programme.

The Statement of Purpose is regularly reviewed and updated to ensure that it provides young people, their families and professionals with up-to-date information

about the home to enable them to make an informed choice. A handbook is available for young people which includes information regarding all aspects of the home.

Young people benefit from a well established, committed, enthusiastic, experienced and well trained staff team. There is a good balance within the team in terms of age, gender and culture. Staff speak with confidence regarding the strong professional relationships they have and the support they give to each other. Meetings and handovers take place regularly and give the staff the opportunity to discuss their practice, concerns and ideas in an open and professional way. Staff speak highly of the accessibility of the management team who provide excellent support and guidance through both regular formal supervision and by operating an open door policy.

Staff development is supported and encouraged; staff have access to a range of excellent training opportunities and confirm that they are encouraged and supported to develop their knowledge and career. All newly recruited staff complete mandatory training prior to taking up their post in the home. This excellent practice ensures that staff are supported and have the skills to meet the needs of the young people they care for.

Rotas provide adequate staffing in line with young people's placement plans. The provider's own bank staff provide cover in the case of an emergency, however, the manager ensures that the same bank staff are used in order to maintain consistency for the young people.

Excellent monitoring systems are in place. Regulation 33 visits take place monthly and are detailed and thorough, requiring action to be taken by the manager if any shortfalls are identified. In addition, the manager completes her Schedule 6 monitoring in line with Regulation 34. Evidence shows that this identifies the home's strengths and weaknesses and areas for improvement. Any issues identified through the monitoring are immediately addressed.

As part of the monitoring process monthly questionnaires are provided to young people, professional visitors and family and friends. Feedback forms are extremely positive. Comments from social workers, such as, 'the communication between staff and myself is fantastic. This is a very good home; very child focused and any issues are discussed and resolved immediately'. One young person wrote when asked what they enjoyed about the home, 'everything', another stated, 'it's the best home in the world'. The robust monitoring enables the Registered Manager to continually review and assess the service provided, resulting in outstanding outcomes for the young people.

Young people's records are well maintained, up-to-date and securely stored. The Registered Manager has a good understanding of the need to report all significant events relating to the protection of children and to ensure that all the relevant professionals are notified should a concern arise. This practice ensures that appropriate action is taken to protect young people following a significant event.

Equality and diversity practice is **outstanding**.