

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Alicea Churchward
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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 home is a large detached property situated in a residential area. It is the only children's home owned by a private provider. The home is registered to provide care and accommodation to four children with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Overall effectiveness

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

Young people benefit from receiving a high standard of care; their views are respected, valued and they are central to their highly personalised care plans; that meet their individual needs very well.

The quality of the relationships between staff and young people in the home are excellent the staff have clear objectives, they know individual young people's needs well and interactions during the inspection were very positive. Young people make exceptional progress from their starting points across all aspects of their welfare and development.

Young people say 'it's a safe place to live... I like my bedroom'... 'I know how to make a complaint but there is nothing to complain about'... 'it's an easier home; not so many rules.' Staff are 'pretty good' and activities 'are excellent'... 'it's a good place to grow up.'

One social worker responded to a request to give their views on the quality of care provided; they reported that 'in the previous placement there were a lot of restraints; there have been none since admission... there has been a massive improvement in (the young person's) behaviour... the placement is going really well... they have used lots of different strategies... I have a really good working relationship with the staff and really good communication with the home and receive regular updates... they have worked hard to build relationships with the family.'

Minor shortfalls were identified in respect of updating the behaviour management policy and ensuring young people have the opportunity to record their views about disciplinary measures. One staff file contained a brief gap in employment with no written explanation of it; remedial action was taken to address this during the inspection.

Areas for improvementStatutory Requirements

This section sets out the actions which must be taken so that the registered person/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the

National Minimum Standards. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Reg.	Requirement	Due date
26 (2001)	ensure that where there is a gap in employment, however small, that there is a satisfactory written explanation of these gaps. (Regulation 26 and Schedule 2 (6))	30/11/2011

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the service should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure that where any sanctions, disciplinary measures or restraint are used, children are encouraged to have their views recorded in the records kept by the home (NMS 3.18)
- review the behaviour management policy to reflect behaviour management strategies used in the home. (NMS 3.3)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people are very well supported and they make exceptional progress to develop a positive self view, emotional resilience and knowledge and understanding of their background. Staff have undertaken excellent work with assistance from other specialised services in respect of life story work; this also gives young people a stronger sense of identity. 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.

Support is provided by staff to attend any medical appointments and all health assessments are up-to-date. Young people's health needs are reflected clearly in their plans which are detailed. Staff ensure that young people understand the importance of maintaining good health. Smoking cessation is actively encouraged. Staff also discuss health matters with young people in their key worker sessions.

Staff consistently and effectively challenge barriers to the full participation of young people at school. They have consistently high aspirations for all young people in the home. The educational achievement of young people is at least comparable with their peers and the home ensures wherever possible that young people make significant progress towards closing the gap. Attendance is excellent.

Informal and formal meetings provide many opportunities for young people to

discuss their views about the quality of care in the home and make a positive contribution; their views are valued and respected. Informal discussions around mealtimes also enable young people to discuss their views routinely and openly. Young people confirm that they understand why it may not be possible to act upon their wishes in all cases.

Young people benefit from regular contact with their family and friends because the staff actively promote opportunities for this. This helps young people to build and maintain important relationships and helps to promote their emotional well-being. Any restrictions placed upon contact arrangements, for example, for safeguarding reasons are detailed in placement plans, risk assessments, agreed by placing authority's and the reasons for these are known and understood by young people.

Quality of care

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

Young people benefit from excellent relationships with the staff built upon a consistent nurturing approach. This helps young people build upon strategies to manage previous challenging behaviours and replace them with appropriate behaviour based upon a system of rewarding positive behaviours. Young people benefit from highly individualised support which helps them to build self-esteem; grow in confidence and address challenging behaviours. Young people benefit from effective engagement with behaviour management plans which also assist the staff in maintaining consistency. The use of sanctions and restraint is very low. Regular key worker sessions enable young people to focus on their targets.

Young people understand how to make a complaint and can also identify staff they can speak with if they have any worries or concerns. The home also has links with the Children's Rights Officer. There is a lot of information in the children's guide in respect of independent advocacy and complaints.

Young people are cared for very well in line with their individual placement plans. The contribution of the home to placement plans is of high quality and involves the young people and people who are significant to them. The plans are comprehensive documents providing an extremely detailed overview of each young person and how the home is working towards the aims and objectives of the plan. Young people are consistently and centrally involved in the planning and review of their care. Young people confirm that they attend their reviews and that their views are taken into account.

Young people have an active voice in suggesting and choosing activities they wish to access. They make excellent use of their leisure time and enjoy participating in activities both in the home and in the local community. Young people have an annual holiday; the trip abroad this year to a well established theme park was very much enjoyed by the young people.

The home is appropriately located and designed. Both the interior and exterior of the

home are maintained to a very high standard. The home is warm, welcoming and homely. Young people's rooms are spacious, clean and personalised very well; this is good because it gives them a feeling of belonging and ownership.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

There are excellent arrangements in place to safeguard young people. The staff team are very effective in promoting the safety of young people. They are aware of the limits of confidentiality and that any concerns about welfare must be reported. They receive regular training in safeguarding welfare and know how to respond effectively to allegations, suspicions or evidence of harm. Individual detailed risk assessments for each young person ensure that all staff know what action to take if there are any concerns about young people's welfare. The management of risks protect young people while enabling them, as appropriate to their age, to take reasonable risks as part of their growth and development.

Young people report feeling safe in the home and say that they are protected. Instances of young people being missing are rare. The home has clear, comprehensive policies and government guidance and are aware of local police protocols should any young person go missing. Young people have detailed risk assessments which detail what action the home will take to ensure that if young people go missing they are supported to return safely to the home. The home maintains records of any occasions when young people are missing from home.

Staff receive training in positive behaviour management and restraint. The use of restraint is very low and the home maintains clear records of any restraint. One shortfall was identified in that young people are not always given the opportunity to record their views in the dedicated records. Staff manage challenging behaviour very well and effectively use diversion strategies. There are some behaviour management strategies employed which are not currently included in the behaviour management policy.

Young people have clear behaviour management plans in place which outline what action staff should take to manage difficult behaviour. Young people are positively praised and rewarded for appropriate behaviour by the staff in the home; this is good practice because this builds upon young people's self-esteem and ensures that negative behaviour does not become the focus of attention.

Staff recruitment files were inspected and one shortfall was identified in that information provided does not provide a complete employment history, it was for a matter of months, verbal confirmation was obtained after the shortfall was identified. In all other aspects the home holds all of the information required and other files have been inspected during previous inspections of the service.

The environment is physically safe and appropriately secure. There are regular

checks upon all equipment and there is certificated maintenance of gas, electric and fire equipment. No hazards were identified during the course of the inspection.

Leadership and management

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

The home is effectively and efficiently managed by an enthusiastic committed team of staff and managers who are dedicated to improving outcomes for the young people in their care. The managers and staff have the required qualifications experience and skill to work with the young people. Managers consistently communicate high expectations to staff about sustaining improvement within the service. There were no requirements or recommendations from the last inspection and the home has demonstrated capacity for continuing improvement through a sustained track record of outstanding judgements during inspections of the service.

There is a clear Statement of Purpose and children's guide that gives a good overview of the service and they provide a clear vision and ethos of the home and how it is operating. There is a lot of useful information included in the children's guide that young people confirm is given to them upon admission. There is plenty of information in respect of independent advice and advocacy details including contact details for the Children's Rights Director.

Managers routinely make good use of a range of rigorous monitoring activities relating to the quality of care provided and improving outcomes for young people. They ensure that developments are realistic and challenging. There is a comprehensive development plan in place and importantly the feedback gained from placing social workers, parents and young people is used to inform planning and development. Planning is founded on robust evidence tackling key areas of weakness systematically and building on areas of strength.

Staff say that training, supervision and support is 'really good and brilliant'. The managers of the home provide regular supervision and opportunities for training and continual development of the staff. All staff have relevant qualifications with access to National Vocational Qualifications at level 3 and 4 and new diploma training being managed well. Systems for staff personal development and appraisal are established. There is a comprehensive induction to the home and staff are subject to undertaking a probationary period; this is good practice and it enables the manager more time to assess the suitability of staff.

Staffing levels are maintained; any shortfalls are covered by existing staff or the organisation's bank staff and there is a good gender balance evident within the team. Staff practice is supported by comprehensive guidance, policies and procedures. Information is accessible and guidance ensures a consistent response to meeting young people's presenting needs.

There are clear accurate records maintained by the home that are detailed, accessible and stored well. Young people's individual needs and identity are being

met and there is a strong focus upon developing young people's understanding of difference. Young people are treated equitably in all aspects of service delivery.

Equality and diversity practice is **outstanding**.