

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Michelle Spruce
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This children's home is registered to provide care and accommodation for two young people with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. The home is operated by the local authority.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: a service of exceptional quality that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

Good: a service of high quality that exceeds minimum requirements

Adequate: a service that only meets minimum requirements

Inadequate: a service that does not meet minimum requirements

Overall effectiveness

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

This is a good service that provides quality care and positive outcomes for young people. The key strengths lie within the dedicated staff team lead by a strong and committed manager. The staff deliver individual personalised care that effectively enhances young people's welfare.

Young people feel safe and protected in an environment where they trust the staff that provides care for them. Young people are happy with the care they receive and relationships are positive. The views of young people about the service are reflected through regular consultation that enhances the running of the home and promotes the quality of care.

The manager of the home takes action to secure improvement through regular monitoring. There are some shortfalls to the service and as a result, three recommendations have been made.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure hazards are removed as is consistent with a domestic setting. In relation to the electrical safety certificate (NMS 10.3)

- ensure the children's home has a clear Statement of Purpose which is available to and understood by staff and children and reflected in any policies, procedures and guidance. In relation to the use of bedroom door alarms (NMS 13.1)
- ensure all staff's work is consistent with these regulations and national minimum standards, the home's policies and procedures. (NMS 21.3)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people work hard to make good progress educationally, emotionally and socially because they have precise placement plans that fully support their individual needs. Education attendance improves significantly. A young person said, 'I never used to attend school but I go every day now.' As a result, young people's education attendance and social relationships improve.

Young people make significant improvement in relation to their health. They take part in planning, shopping and preparing their meals and attend routine health checks. Young people take part in daily physical exercise that enhances their well-being. As a result, young people remain fit and well.

Young people understand why they are in care and benefit from regular one-to-one support from staff to discuss their thoughts and feelings. Additional external health services provide further emotional support. This helps young people understand who they are and improves confidence and self-esteem.

Young people remain in contact with people who are significant in their lives. A young person said, 'My friends visit me and I see my family.' As a result, relationships grow and bonds become stronger.

Young people make smooth transitions to independence. Pathway plans are clear and developed with young people to ensure they leave care in a way that they have chosen. Young people develop life skills that prepare them for leaving care giving them confidence and maturity to face the challenges adult life brings. As a result, young people leave care ready and confident for adult life.

Quality of care

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

Staff create opportunities for young people to develop and strengthen relationships through constant support and supervision. Relationships between staff and young people are transparent, trusting and respectful. Regular discussions highlight the expectations of young people and provide a forum where emotions and feelings are expressed. As a result, young people shape the environment they live in, resolve conflict and improve behaviour.

Young people know and understand how to complain because staff provide a children's guide that clearly identifies how to raise a complaint. The home is visited on a regular basis by an independent advocacy service that assists young people to raise their concerns independently. This promotes the rights of young people.

Staff work in partnership with young people, social workers and other external partners significant to young people to deliver good quality care. Clear placement planning assists young people to achieve their own personal goals and aspirations that shapes the care they receive. For example, positive placement changes have taken place as a result of young people's active involvement in their care planning. This means staff act on and listen to the views of young people.

Staff ensure young people have access to services to support their individual needs. As a result, their physical, emotional and psychological needs are met. Arrangements for medication are safe and well monitored. Joint partnership working provides young people with support to services that aim to reduce activities harmful to their health.

The home is well decorated, furnished and welcoming. Young people feel cared for and settled in the home because they are involved in making the changes to the environment that reflects their individual personalities. As a result, the home is maintained to a good standard.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Staff place young people central to the care they provide. Young people say they are safe and feel safe. One young person said, 'Staff are really nice, I know I am safe because intruder alarms are used at night.' This makes young people feel protected from harm.

Young people understand the importance of keeping themselves safe and benefit from joint partnership working with the local community police. The community liaison officer visits the home regularly and provides advice and support to young people. As a result, young people's awareness about missing from care, exploitation and anti-social behaviour is raised. This helps young people to stay safe in the community.

The home provides strategies that effectively reduce incidents of unacceptable behaviour. For example, fair sanctions and rewards reduce the need for the use of physical intervention because of their effectiveness. As a result, physical intervention is only used as a last resort and young people understand why this is necessary.

The home takes a multi-agency approach to supporting young people who go missing. There are effective measures in place that ensure young people remain in contact with the home when missing and joint partnership working ensures their safe return. As a result, missing episodes are reducing.

Leadership and management

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

The home has undergone some management and staffing changes since the last inspection. The new manager is in the process of applying to register with Ofsted for the service. Further changes to the staffing arrangements have strengthened the service which now benefits from a full complement of staff and an assistant manager. One requirement made at the last inspection, requiring that the manager provides Ofsted with a report reviewing the quality of care, has been met.

There is a Statement of Purpose for the home that is revised annually by the manager. However, it does not refer to the use of bedroom door alarms that are used to monitor the safety of young people. Furthermore, the home does not have a policy that refers to the practice and how it is to be used. Although staff have used the monitoring system previously, young people currently placed do not require the method.

The home is monitored by the manager on a monthly basis and strengths and weaknesses are highlighted through the audit. Additional monitoring is also undertaken by a person not in day-to-day running of the home. As a result of the regular monitoring the home has a development plan to improve the service over the coming year. This secures improvement and confirms continued development.

The health and safety requirements of the home are maintained by all staff. Staff understand the importance of their responsibility to provide a safe environment for those that live, work and visit the home. Routine fire drills, monitoring checks and servicing takes place to keep the home well maintained. However, the five year electrical safety certificate is out of date by five months. Although a date is booked for the inspection to take place this does not guarantee that the home is currently safe.

Staff benefit from regular supervision, appraisal and training to enhance their personal development that improves the quality of care they deliver to young people. As a result, young people continue to live in a nurturing and caring environment.

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* and the evaluation schedule for the inspection of children's homes.