

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Mark Kersh
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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 provides care and accommodation for up to six young people of either gender, with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. This home is operated by a private organisation.

Overall effectiveness

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

Young people make good progress in relation to their starting points and continue to develop in a warm, nurturing and supportive environment. They achieve better outcomes in their education, safety, health and emotional development. Young people feel safe living at the home and exercise choice and responsibility in daily living. There are detailed individual plans in place which are regularly updated and known by young people, who contribute to them.

Young people's views and opinions are regularly ascertained and this enables them to have a say in the running of the home. As a result, young people feel consulted and they are able to make a positive contribution towards their care. A social worker says, 'young people continue to respond well to the staff team... It is evident that they wish to remain at the home and I am happy with the standard of care.'

Young people living in the home have good relationships with the staff team and describe staff as 'happy, smiley and sharing people' who support them, take an interest in them and care about what they are doing.

Staff actively promote safe working practices and are experienced in identifying and dealing with safeguarding concerns. As a result young people confirm they are safe and feel safe in this home.

As a result of this inspection, the responsible person is asked to ensure that the children's guide contains information in relation to independent reviewing officers, that consultation is extended to include feedback from parents and placing authorities and that young people participate in the recruitment process.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure the children's guide includes how young people can contact their

independent reviewing officer (NMS 13.5)

- ensure the views of the young people's family, social worker and independent reviewing officer are sought regularly in relation to young people's care (NMS 1.4)
- ensure where practicable, young people are involved in the recruitment of staff in the home. (NMS 16.8)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people receive individualised care and support which helps them grow in confidence. They are supported to understand their background through meaningful contact with their families and individual key-working sessions. Staff promote young people's independence and they are encouraged to take acceptable risks and responsibility. They are involved in the daily running of the home, cooking, shopping, cleaning, menu and activity planning. They participate in young people's meetings and contribute their views for change and improvement. These practices empower young people to have control over their own daily lives.

Young people's health care is of a good standard with all young people having access to a local doctor, dentist and optician. Appropriate consents are in place for medical matters. Specific and specialist health provision is provided by professionals external to the home and staff support young people to engage positively with them. As a result young people feel confident their health and social needs will be met.

Young people's education is well supported at the home and young people attend mainstream schools in the area. School attendance is good and staff attend meetings and help the young people with their homework. This input helps the young people to take their education seriously and think about what career they would like to pursue in the future. Young people are able to take part in college courses and work experience and activities in the community.

Young people contribute to menu selection and are aware of healthy options. Advice, guidance and support on choices which impact on having a healthy life such as smoking and drug use is available through trained staff and external agencies. The looked after children nurse visits regularly to support young people. In addition young people's views are sought through surveys and there are social promotion days where young people can access advice in a fun and informative way.

Young people are supported to develop life skills which helps prepare them for adulthood. Young people say they like helping with preparing meals, cooking and shopping. There is an expectation that they will keep their rooms tidy. Young people are encouraged to participate in activities in the wider community and are encouraged and supported to use local transport.

Quality of care

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

Young people enjoy good relationships with staff and they receive continuity of care to enable them to sustain their positive relationships. Their views and opinions are taken into account to enable them to influence the running of the home. There are regular opportunities for young people to be consulted. As a result, young people feel listened to, involved and valued.

Information is made available to the young people so they know how, and to whom they can make a complaint. They confirmed they know how the process works. Young people can be sure that all complaints are taken seriously with a robust investigation carried out in close liaison with other professionals, if required, and outcomes relayed back to the complainant. Records of complaints are well-maintained and monitored by the management team.

Young people are cared for in line with their individual placement and health care plans. These plans are structured to cover the Every Child Matters outcome areas and form the basis of a comprehensive and specialist care planning system. Young people's care plans very clearly identify their specialist and individual needs. Consistent and thorough monitoring enables staff to evaluate the young people's progress on a regular basis. This contributes to feedback to the placing authority and parents. Young people are supported to recognise the progress they make through discussions before, during and after their statutory review.

Young people's medication is stored securely. There are clear procedures in place for administering and disposing of medication which are followed in practice by trained staff. These practices ensure that all medication brought into the home is accountable.

Staff champion young people's educational needs with teachers and social workers to ensure their educational needs are fully met. Despite challenges, young people attend education provision regularly and make significant progress which is highlighted in school reports. Staff emphasise the value of education and provide learning experiences to complement young people's education. These practices help young people achieve their potential.

Young people receive opportunities to pursue their individual interests and hobbies. Consequently, they are able to develop their own social networks, leisure interests and friendships. Sufficient funds are made available for young people's recreational pastimes. As a result, the frequency and types of activities that young people pursue are diverse.

The home is adequately maintained but there are some areas where the decoration and some furniture have been damaged. Young people say they like their rooms which they can personalise with posters and pictures and it is private. Young people have access to a computer which has safeguards installed. Young people say they use it for their homework and social networking. Staff confirm all young people use

the computer responsibly.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people feel safe and are protected from harm. Staff place the safety of young people at the highest priority and they are well trained in safeguarding. They are able to recognise the signs and symptoms of abuse, including issues in relation to exploitation. Staff have taken decisive and appropriate action to protect young people. Staff work effectively with parents and the safeguarding agencies to promote the safety of young people.

Young people have clear, well-understood and effective risk management plans in place. These recognise the individual needs of young people and provide staff with suitable strategies to manage any associated risks. Young people are supported to take risks as a normal part of growing up. Effective strategies have a positive impact on young people and as a result there is a decrease in the number of missing from home incidents.

Relationships between staff and young people are respectful and warm providing the basis for managing behaviour effectively. There are few incidents of restraints and staff are clear that this is only used as a very last resort to prevent harm to young people. Methods such as rewards, consequences and adult role-modelling encourages young people's positive behaviour and assists them in accepting responsibility for their actions. The staff team reinforce an anti-bullying culture and incidents are effectively resolved to protect young people.

Young people benefit from living in a home which promotes their physical safety. All health and safety checks are up to date and regular fire evacuation drills are held so that young people know how to evacuate the premises safely in the event of fire. Risks associated with the building are minimised and household appliances are regularly serviced and maintained to promote environmental safety.

Young people are further protected by the organisation's robust recruitment procedures that follow safer recruitment standards. Staff appropriately monitor any visitors to the home and maintain a visitor's book.

Leadership and management

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

Young people who live in this home benefit from a management team that is effective and efficient in meeting young people's needs and supporting staff. The home meets the aims and objectives of its Statement of Purpose, and parents and social workers are clear about the services and support the home provides. Young people receive a children's guide which is informative and advises them of most of the services the home provides for them.

There were no requirements or recommendations from the previous inspection and the home has a good track record of compliance.

The provider and manager effectively monitor the quality of care and identify areas for improvement. The changes necessary to improve the service always take place, improving the quality of care and support young people receive. The manager has a good system for collating data and analysing individual young people's needs and how these are being met. This system also identifies any patterns or trends which can be worked through with young people. As a result young people's needs are consistently being monitored and addressed.

There are detailed development plans in place for the organisation and for this home. The home's development plan shows targets to achieve and is understood by all staff. This further improves the service to young people and involves them more in the daily operation of this home.

Young people receive care from a staff team who are themselves well supported and enthusiastic about their roles. The organisation demonstrates a commitment to staff training on a variety of topics which address the diverse needs of young people. Staff feel their training needs are met and positively engage in training on offer, both internal and external. All existing staff have either attained or are enrolled to gain the required qualification and any new staff are to commence this following confirmation of their probation period. Regular quality supervision, annual appraisals and training opportunities all contribute to the competence of the staff in providing good care to young people.

The diversity of the staff team ensures a range of skills and qualities in meeting the individual needs of young people. Staff have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities and have high expectations for young people. Recordings are good and provide a picture of young people's daily lives. Young people's information is securely stored and shared confidentially to protect their safety and privacy.

Young people's individual needs in relation to their ethnicity and family backgrounds are considered. Policies and procedures comprehensively address equality and diversity. There is a commitment to anti-discriminatory practice and fairness to all. Relationships between staff and young people are professional and respectful. Staff are very well-informed of individual needs relating to race, religion, sexuality, and ethnicity. There are consistent working practices which focus on enhancing young people's quality of life, so young people receive support to take pride in themselves and develop a positive identity.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.