

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Norma Welsby
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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 children's home is privately operated. It is a detached house, domestic in character and situated in a busy residential area. The home is registered for three children and young people between the ages of 10 years and 17 years of age.

The location of the home provides good access to a wide range of community facilities. Young people have their own bedroom and access to a good standard of communal space and outdoor gardens and equipment.

Overall effectiveness

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

This is a very well managed home, in which the staff team work effectively together to achieve the best possible outcomes for young people. Staff are ambitious for young people and are energetic for continuous improvements that they feel they can make at the home. There is an extremely positive and calm atmosphere in the home.

The relationships between staff and young people are outstanding. Young people feel that staff really know and understand them as individuals. One young person described the home as 'outstanding' and all views gathered from young people and stakeholders were extremely positive.

Young people make excellent progress in their placement. They enjoy living at the home and take an active role in their own care planning. They feel that staff care about them and want them to have as many opportunities as possible and be well prepared for adulthood. Their views are well sought and are central to the way the home operates and develops.

There are two minor areas for improvement, these are in relation to staff training and improving the internal facilities for young people.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- improve the design of the home by responding promptly to young people's request for a shower which will better meet their needs and improve their well-being (NMS 10.2)

- improve the training plan to ensure staff training is kept up-to-date, for example by providing refresher training in a timely way. (NMS 18.1)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Overall, the outcomes for young people living at this service are outstanding. Young people are positive about their placement at this home and recognise how well they are doing. One young person said: 'Staff are great and this is the best home I have lived in. It is really just like a proper home. If I had to judge it I would say it is outstanding.'

The home is very effective in providing personalised and well-planned care. Young people receive personalised care that promotes all aspects of their individual identity. For example, staff facilitate access to specialist support, but also in areas such as supporting musical interests and dress sense. Young people benefit from living in a positive and nurturing environment. They make excellent progress in respect of their starting point at the time of their placement. For example young people develop a more positive self-view, emotional resilience and confidence in themselves as they mature into young adults.

Staff actively promote and support young people's education and attainment. Young people engage very well in a variety of educational opportunities. Staff value education and provide lots of support and encouragement. Young people benefit from staff having high expectations about what they can achieve during their placement and beyond.

Mealtimes are planned and sociable occasions. Young people say that they enjoy the food provided and have regular opportunities to plan and cook for themselves. They can also influence regular changes to the menu plan. Staff recognise the social importance of mealtimes and young people are also provided with opportunities to eat out.

There is an excellent approach to promoting the physical and emotional well-being of young people. Individual files are well organised and include identification of health needs and how these will be met. Staff ensure that young people are registered with doctors, dentists and opticians and identify if a young person would benefit from specialist support. This enables young people to receive specialist care, in accordance with their individual needs, and which improves their outcomes.

Young people benefit from staff having a good understanding of the benefits of them sustaining contact. The arrangements for contact are clearly recorded within young people's placement plans. Young people spoken to confirm the diverse ways they are encouraged to maintain positive contact with family, friends and other people important to them.

When appropriate, young people are encouraged to learn skills which will prepare them for adulthood. For example, they have regular opportunities to develop confidence in domestic skills, budgeting, shopping, preparing meals, accessing local services and using public transport.

Quality of care

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

The quality of young people's care is excellent. At this home, young people thrive and make real progress. They receive personalised support from a highly dedicated and very competent staff team.

Staff are very motivated and skilled in helping young people achieve the objectives of their placement. Placement plans are comprehensive and written clearly which enables staff to provide young people with high quality care. Staff work extremely closely with placing authorities to ensure that individual needs are thoroughly addressed. Consultation with a placing authority confirmed that they are very satisfied with the quality of care and support young people receive at this service. One social worker stated: 'I found the home to be extremely well run, staff very welcoming and with clear communication.'

Young people enjoy very positive and constructive relationships with staff, built on trust and mutual respect. They have a key worker, but all staff work together closely to provide consistent care and support. Young people are taught to be considerate and respectful towards their peers, family and professionals involved in their lives.

Consultation with young people is thoughtful and purposeful. Consequently, young people are able to influence decisions made in respect of their care and their future. A range of enjoyable activities are available to young people and they clearly have a say in how they spend their leisure time. They are very well supported in their individual interests and ambitions for the future.

Young people know how to make a complaint and feel confident that staff will listen to them.

Suitable procedures are in place to manage and administer medication. Staff have had training and all staff have ongoing first aid training. Currently no medication is in use.

The home is situated in a pleasant residential area. It blends into the neighbourhood, resembling a family home. It is within easy reach of the local town and an extensive network of transport links. Young people regularly use these facilities. The internal environment is light, spacious and contemporary and the design and facilities of the home generally meets young people's needs; however young people have requested a shower as they feel it will better meet their needs than a bath. Each young person has a good sized and well equipped single bedroom, which they are able to personalise. Externally, young people have access to a large garden and local parks.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people say they feel safe and protected. There are excellent systems in place for responding to allegations and suspicions of abuse. Proactive safeguarding practice means that all young people have a strong sense of safety and well-being. Clear boundaries and individual risk assessments also mean that young people are able to take reasonable risks and develop their independence as they move towards adulthood.

There are appropriate systems in place to protect young people should they go missing, including individual protocols. Staff are very open with young people about the procedures they need to follow if this occurs and young people benefit from having this awareness. There were no incidents of current young people going missing. Where this has previously been an issue, staff have made commendable efforts, for example in maintaining contact with young people while absent and in seeking specialist support and counselling to deter future incidents.

Bullying is not identified as a problem at the home. Both staff and young people know bullying is unacceptable. Staff communicate openly with young people and provide positive role models so that young people learn how to treat others with respect but also how to be assertive and respond appropriately should they be treated unfairly. Young people are helped to understand how to keep themselves safe, including outside of the home and when using social media.

Young people enjoy sound relationships with each other and staff, interact positively and behave appropriately. Young people confirm that they feel staff treat them fairly and understand that boundaries are in place to ensure their safety and good behaviour. Sanctions and rewards for behaviour are clear, reasonable and fair and are understood by all staff and young people and consistently monitored by the manager. Any issues arising are openly discussed with the young person and staff involved and resolved quickly. This open and positive response promotes a sense of fairness and is in keeping with the excellent team working at this home. The young people living at the home have not been restrained by staff. While staff are trained in physical interventions, they see this as a very last resort, deploying other techniques as a means of de-escalating and managing behaviours.

Staff working with young people are carefully selected and vetted. Since the last inspection there have been no new external appointments, only one internal transfer. Visitors to the home are also vetted and supervised. These practices support the view that young people are protected from people who may pose a risk to them.

The home provides a well designed, safe and pleasant environment, suited to young people. It is well located and maintained to a good standard. Young people can influence decisions, such as décor and choice of bedroom. All relevant safety checks

in respect of gas, electricity and fire are carried out at the required intervals.

Leadership and management

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

This home is very well managed. The manager has been in post since 2006 and is appropriately qualified. Young people living at this home benefit from the tremendous team work spirit which is an outstanding feature. Staff feel valued and feel they can make a significant contribution to the home and this positive ethos benefits young people.

The service continues to demonstrate capacity for further improvement. The service is regularly monitored and shortfalls are routinely identified and action taken. The home has recently formalised a development plan. There is also good compliance. Two recommendations made at the last inspection in February 2011 have been addressed. These related to ensuring records relating to staff recruitment properly evidence good practice in all appointments and that the home evidences its response to shortfalls identified during quality monitoring processes.

The home is well resourced and employs a sufficient number of staff to maintain good cover. Staffing levels vary from day-to-day, facilitating flexibility to support the needs of young people through education, contact and activities. Staff benefit from regular staff meetings, supervision and appraisal, which means their training needs are regularly reviewed and addressed. All of the staff have achieved a National Vocational Qualification at level 3 or above. Ongoing training is provided to a good level. However not all refresher training is provided in a timely way, resulting in some staff not having prompt refresher training in such areas as safeguarding and behaviour management. The impact of this is judged to be minimal at present due to the stable and experienced staff team in place.

Information relating to significant events affecting young people's safety is notified to relevant agencies, including Ofsted and placing authorities. This ensures that issues relating to young people's safety is appropriately shared and effectively managed.

The promotion of equality and diversity is excellent. Young people thrive and make real progress. They receive personalised support from a highly dedicated and very competent staff team. The diverse staff team supports young people by providing positive role models. Young people are treated as unique individuals and they receive fair and equal care and support within the home. They learn to have confidence in a range of situations, to develop emotional resilience and to establish a positive self-view. The service has a commitment to anti-discriminatory practice and discriminatory issues are managed sensitively and effectively. The diverse staff team supports young people by providing positive role models.

Equality and diversity practice is **outstanding**.

