

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 service is a private children's home, registered to care for up to two children between the ages of 10 years and 17 years of age. The home came under new ownership in March 2011.

The property is a large terraced house, domestic in character and well maintained. There are four bedrooms located on the first floor; two are used by young people and two by sleeping-in night staff. There is a bathroom, with shower facility, and a separate toilet. The office is situated on the ground floor, along with the lounge, kitchen and separate dining room.

Overall effectiveness

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

There is a positive and friendly atmosphere in the home and young people are generally very satisfied with the care and support they receive. Young people benefit from living in a home that is comfortable and domestic and which provides access to a good range of community facilities.

Very good relationships exist between young people and staff. Young people benefit from a staff team that is well motivated and committed to helping young people stay safe and make good progress while living at the home.

Young people say they are well consulted and feel that they can effect change in the home, in such areas as menus and activities.

There is good attention to the promotion of equality and diversity. Young people receive a very personalised well-planned package of care aimed at meeting their needs and help them achieve positive outcomes from their placement.

Some areas for development have been identified during this inspection and consequently five recommendations have been made and are detailed below.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- contribute to the development of a pathways plan for young people preparing for transition (NMS 12.2)
- monitor and update placement plans to ensure key information is included such as contact arrangements (NMS25.2)
- contact placing authorities to request that statutory reviews take place in a timely way (NMS 25.5)
- protect privacy and confidentiality by providing young people with a key to their bedroom (NMS 3.7 and NMS 10.1)
- ensure that the registered person has a written developmental plan, reviewed annually, for the future of the home, either identifying any planned changes in the operation or resources of the service, or confirming the continuation of the home's current operation and resource (NMS 15.2).

Outcomes for children and young people

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

The home is effective in providing personalised and well-planned care. Young people's individual and diverse needs are well met and are well evidenced in all outcome areas. For example staff recognise and meet age appropriate needs, in areas such as leisure and development of personal skills and responsibility. Staff have a good understanding of the strengths and needs of young people and ensure that their confidence and social inclusion is promoted. The service has a commitment to further improve equality and diversity within the service to enhance outcomes for young people.

Overall, the outcomes for young people living at this service are good. Young people are positive about their placement at this home. One young person said that the 'home is sound' and the staff 'great'. They feel that staff care about them and want them to do well. Young people and staff communicate openly and positively. They also respect each other. These factors enable young people to feel valued and develop a positive self view.

Young people have their health needs thoroughly assessed. Staff are mindful of not only the physical, but also the psychological and emotional wellbeing of young people. Where needed, specialist services are accessed to better promote young people's health and wellbeing. Good records are maintained evidencing the range of health services used by young people. Staff encourage young people to live healthy lifestyles, by taking regular exercise and enjoying outdoor activities. Staff also encourage young people to avoid activities that present a risk to their health, such as drinking alcohol and smoking.

Mealtimes are planned and sociable occasions. On the whole, young people say that they enjoy the food provided and have regular opportunities to cook. They can also influence regular changes to the menu plan. Staff demonstrate a good recognition of the social importance of mealtimes and young people are also provided with opportunities to eat out or have family eat with them.

Staff actively promote and support young people's education and attainment. Young people engage well in a variety of educational opportunities. Staff value education and provide whatever support and encouragement they can. Young people attend education facilities that best meets their needs and abilities.

Staff work hard to ensure that young people enjoy positive contact with families. They facilitate contact, by transporting young people and providing financial assistance. These are good arrangements that promote young people's sense of identity and positive self view.

Young people are encouraged to learn skills appropriate to their age and 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. A pathways plan was not in place for a young person preparing for leaving care, although staff were very mindful of what needed to be done to prepare for transition. The home provides opportunities that are geared to the age of each young person and while young people embrace these

opportunities to varying degrees, staff are committed to motivating young people as they are aware that it will help young people to prepare well for independence and adult life.

Quality of care

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

Young people enjoy very positive and constructive relationships with staff. They have a key worker, but all staff work together closely to provide consistent care and support. There is a positive and open dialogue between staff and young people. Young people feel well consulted and confirm that they are encouraged and supported to make decisions about their lives. This is important as it ensures that young people have lots of opportunities to express their views and influence decisions that are made about themselves in particular and also the running of the home in general. For example, young people feel that they can participate in meetings about them and their future and can have a say in day-to-day matters in the home such as menus, planned activities and contact arrangements.

The needs of young people are thoroughly assessed. There is a clear decision-making process regarding admission and discharge of young people. This ensures that young people are appropriately placed and their needs can be met by the home. There is good involvement of a range of services, such as police liaison and advocacy services. Young people's statutory reviews are usually held at regular intervals and they are encouraged to participate and express their views. However, a recent review following an emergency admission (72 hour) was not held formally or in a timely manner. Whilst placement plans are in place and generally of a good standard, one plan examined did not include detailed or up-to-date information; for example known contact arrangements were not recorded.

Suitable procedures are in place to manage and administer medication. Staff have had training and all staff have ongoing first aid training.

Young people are encouraged to participate in a range of purposeful and enjoyable leisure activities. This helps them to develop their confidence and social skills. For example, young people are given opportunities to visit gyms, play football and golf and to enjoy trips to the cinema and seaside.

The home environment is light and spacious and young people also have access to outside space and local parks. It is located in a pleasant residential area close to a variety of community facilities. Each young person has a good sized and well equipped single bedroom, which they are able to personalise. While bedroom doors are lockable young people did not have their own key. Throughout, the home is clean, comfortable and well maintained. The home also has its own vehicle which enables young people to access facilities further afield.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people feel safe and protected at the home. There are good systems in place for responding to allegations and suspicions of abuse. The staff team have had training and are experienced in safeguarding young people and know how to proceed if there are concerns about young people's welfare. The home has established excellent working practices with a range of professionals, which further protects young people.

A policy to counter bullying is in place. Young people are provided with written information and have access to helpline telephone numbers. Staff work hard to help young people develop a better understanding of what constitutes bullying and what action they should take if they are bullied.

The home has 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. Incidents of young people being absent without authority or being reported missing have increased over recent months, but the home is very proactive in managing this situation and had already convened a meeting with interested parties to discuss positive steps that could be taken in the interests of the young people in question.

Generally, behaviour is well managed and young people know they are expected to behave well. Staff receive training in physical interventions, although the last intervention was in July 2009. Occasionally staff have to sanction young people, but this is usually by way of reparation for deliberate damage and young people feel that to pay a contribution towards repair or replacement is a fair approach.

Young people confirmed that they know about the complaints procedure, that they are confident and comfortable with the process, but did not have any complaints.

Comprehensive staff recruitment procedures, including clearance checks, are followed with all checks having to be in place before a new member of staff starts working with young people. There have been no new external appointments since the last inspection, only internal transfers. Visitors to the home are also vetted. These practices support the view that young people are protected from people who may pose a risk to them.

The home's health and safety measures provide a safe environment for young people to live comfortably. There is an ongoing programme of redecoration, repairs and refurbishment to maintain good standards throughout. Fire safety checks are regularly undertaken and fire drills are done at appropriate intervals. Young people are involved so that they know what to do in the event of a fire.

Leadership and management

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

This service has been managed by the current manager for two years. The manager is suitably qualified and experienced and is well supported by a line management structure and good staffing levels within the home. There have been steady improvements and outcomes for young people are good. Young people are very much central to the home's ethos and the service continues to demonstrate capacity for further improvement. The home has recently changed ownership. Staff are continuing to work enthusiastically with young people to ensure they do not experience any disruption to the quality of support they receive. However, there is no developmental plan available to staff and so they remain unaware of any planned changes in the operation or resources of the home.

The service is regularly monitored and shortfalls are routinely identified and action taken. There is also good compliance. A previous requirement and three recommendations made at the last inspection in November 2010 have been addressed. These related to staffing arrangements, staff training and recording. By making these improvements the service has demonstrated its commitment to improving the quality of the service and outcomes for young people.

The Statement of Purpose is regularly reviewed and provides an accurate reflection of what the home is able to provide. A children's guide is available for young people either prior to their admission or when they move in to the home. Current young people had been given this guide and felt it helps them understand the aims and objectives of the home and what services and facilities it provides.

The home employs a sufficient number of staff. As well as a permanent staff team, the home also has access to bank staff members to cover absences and this approach provides young people with a good level of continuity. Care staff benefit from regular staff meetings, supervision and appraisal, which means their training needs are regularly reviewed and addressed. At the time of this inspection 100% of staff had achieved a minimum level 3 qualification in the care of young people and level 2 in team leading, which is commendable.

Overall, young people's records are well maintained and stored securely. They provide a good standard of relevant information about the young people, they are regularly reviewed and social workers kept informed. Young people are involved in their review meetings and they are encouraged to put forward their views. 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.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.