

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 privately run children's home. The home provides long term care and accommodation for two children with emotional or behavioural difficulties.

Overall effectiveness

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

Staff provide personalised and well planned care that meets young people's individual and complex needs. Each young person's individuality is promoted and respected and this helps them to develop a positive self-view. Young people benefit from excellent relationships with staff. Their open and honest approach is appreciated by young people as they feel they can trust staff, and feel safe in their care. There is an extremely positive and calm atmosphere in the home. Young people make outstanding progress in relation to their starting points, in respect of social confidence, education and practical skills. All staff need to have access to the policies and procedures that underpin their work.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure that manager and staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities and in particular have full access to all company policies and procedures. (NMS 14.4 and NMS 21.4)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people are positive about their placement and recognise how well they are doing. Young people cite the quality and commitment of the staff team as being the most significant contributory factor in ensuring their placement is positive. Young people are also complimentary about the range of activities provided and the opportunities they have to be consulted and to participate in decision making. Young people maintain positive relationships with their peers and have regular contact with their families.

Young people are helped to understand their emotional response to a variety of difficult situations that they face, to lead a healthy lifestyle and to take responsibility for their own health and well-being. Young people benefit from having a nutritional and healthy diet and can develop skills and knowledge that will help them in adult life. There is also an outstanding programme of activities in place, providing young people with lots of opportunities to learn new leisure skills, take regular exercise and enjoy a wide variety of educational trips.

Young people benefit from being supported by staff who have consistently high expectations of them. Staff recognise the importance of young people doing well in their education and support individual needs to an outstanding standard. For example, where young people have missed out on education, they are motivated to catch up and an educational programme is provided, which includes a diverse range of learning opportunities from classroom and internet learning to a variety of educational trips. This exemplifies how well the home endeavours to address individual needs and contributes to young people achieving outstanding outcomes.

Young people develop appropriate practical skills and confidence in their own abilities. Specific programmes are in place, reflective of age and geared to meet individual needs and interests. Young people have opportunities to develop skills for independence and adult life through carrying out domestic tasks, budgeting, shopping, preparing meals, accessing local services and using public transport.

Quality of care

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

Young people benefit from a staff team that has an excellent understanding of their individual needs and what it is hoped they will achieve from their placement. Each young person has a placement plan, to which they have contributed. Staff are very knowledgeable about young people's needs and aspirations. The service employs a good mix of staff who provide positive role models and who work effectively with young people to establish good values such as respect and tolerance.

Staff are very motivated and skilled in helping young people achieve the objectives of their placement. For example, they work extremely closely with placing authorities to ensure that individual needs, such as education, protection or contact, 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. They feel staff are 'highly motivated' and respond effectively to meeting 'individual and complex' needs.

The home is situated in a pleasant residential area. The property blends into the neighbourhood, resembling a family home. It is within reach of the local town and an extensive network of transport links. The environment is light and spacious. Each young person has a good sized and well equipped single bedroom, which they are able to personalise. The home is clean, comfortable and well maintained. Young people also have access to outside space and local parks, which they regularly use.

Staff and young people enjoy excellent relationships. The staff team are proactive and imaginative in finding ways to support young people to ensure they get the most from their placement. They ensure that they listen to young people's views and respond appropriately. Young people confirm that they know about the complaints procedure and that they are confident and comfortable with the process. Staff provide appropriate support when young people wish to raise issues with their placing authority or have access to an independent advocate.

Staff treat young people respectfully and reciprocal respect is encouraged between young people and staff. Individual diverse needs are appropriately identified and addressed, both in daily living and care planning. Staff place the well-being of young people at the centre of their practice. For example, staff pay excellent attention to personal safety issues, health needs and special dietary requirements. This helps young people to feel valued and to achieve a healthy and positive personal identity.

There is an excellent approach to promoting the physical and emotional well-being of young people. Access to specialist services is facilitated. Individual files are well organised and include identification of health needs and how these will be met. The arrangements for dealing with medication are safe and effective with administration record sheets appropriately completed.

Mealtimes are well managed, orderly and sociable occasions where young people and staff sit down together. Young people say that they enjoy the food provided and can influence regular changes to the menu plan. The staff team enjoy working with young people to plan nutritious and varied menus. They help young people to cook and develop their awareness of healthy eating. Young people have opportunities to

cook regularly, including a special meal, which may be a family favourite and share this with staff or visiting family. Such an opportunity helps young people maintain links with their cultural background and personal identity.

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. Sometimes young people may feel over protected but staff are open about any restrictions that are in place, such as court decisions. There are excellent systems in place for responding to allegations and suspicions of abuse. The staff team receive regular training in safeguarding and know how to proceed if they are concerned about young people's welfare.

Staff provide young people with appropriate guidance, boundaries and incentives to behave well. They are consulted regularly and their views are taken into account in how they spend their time. Staff empower young people through their open and transparent ways of working. There is a culture of promoting young people's rights and providing them with important information. For example, young people influence decision making in areas such as personal goal setting, incentives and activities. This is very positive and important to young people and results in young people behaving in a mature and respectful way. For current young people there are no recorded incidents of sanctions, reparation or physical intervention.

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. There were no incidents of current young people going missing. Where this has previously been an issue, commendable efforts are made by staff to discourage young people from going missing and maintaining contact with them while they are absent.

All staff are carefully selected and vetted, with all checks in place before a new member of staff starts working with young people. Since the last inspection there have been no new external appointments, 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. The building is well maintained and the 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**.

The manager of this children's home is suitably qualified and experienced and is well supported by the line management structure. Young people are very much central to the home's ethos and the service continues to demonstrate capacity for further improvement. The service is regularly monitored and shortfalls are routinely identified and action taken. There is also good compliance. Four recommendations made at the last inspection in February 2011 have been addressed. These related to formalising a search protocol, providing opportunities for young people isolated by their circumstances to make and sustain friendships, ensuring individual files contain all necessary information and developing a system to show how improvements in quality are achieved. By making these improvements the service has demonstrated its commitment to improving the quality of the service and outcomes for young people.

The home has recently changed ownership. However, staff have not yet got full access to the new company's policies and procedures. The Statement of Purpose has recently been reviewed and provides an accurate reflection of what the home is able to provide. A young person's guide is given to young people either prior to their admission or when they move into the home.

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. Staff are committed to enabling young people to achieve as much as possible from their placement and to work towards fulfilling their potential. Young people are helped to develop confidence in a range of situations and to develop 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.

The home is well resourced and employs a sufficient number of staff to maintain consistent cover. Staff are working very effectively with young people ensuring they do not experience any disruption to the quality of care and support they receive. Staffing levels vary from day-to-day, facilitating flexibility to support the needs of young people through education, contact and activities. As well as a permanent staff team, the home also has access to named bank staff members. All care staff benefit from regular staff meetings, supervision and appraisal, which means their training needs are regularly reviewed and addressed. There is a rolling programme of training provided, including refresher training in mandatory areas such as child protection, management of behaviour and first aid. At the time of this inspection, 100% of staff had achieved at least a level three National Vocational Qualification in Caring for Children and Young People, which is commendable.

Equality and diversity practice is **outstanding**.

