

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Dennis Bradley
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The children's home provides care and accommodation for up to six young people. The home is provided by a charity and is registered to care for young people with emotional or behavioural difficulties.

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**.

Overall this home provides a good quality of care and staff work hard to promote improved outcomes for the young people.

Staff are skilled at building positive relationships with young people whose behaviour, at times, can be very challenging. Young people are encouraged to discuss their care needs and contribute to their care plans. They benefit from good levels of support tailored to meet their individual and very diverse needs.

Young people live in a comfortable, homely environment which is well cared for. They receive good support and encouragement from staff to attend and engage positively in their education and training. Young people also receive good opportunities to practice and develop life skills they will need as an adult.

Young people benefit from being cared for by a stable and experienced team of staff who endeavour to keep them safe and promote their welfare. Young people say they feel safe living at the home and can talk to staff if they have any worries or concerns. Staff work well with professionals such as social workers and teachers to promote good outcomes for the young people.

The home is effectively led and the staff are committed to developing the service they provide to young people. There are good arrangements in place for monitoring the care and welfare of the young people and the progress they make while living at the home. Staff receive good support to enable them to promote positive outcomes for young people.

There are shortfalls relating to some of the home's records, the action taken when an allegation is made about staff, and informing Ofsted of serious incidents.

Areas for improvement

Statutory Requirements

This section sets out the actions which must be taken so that the registered person/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Reg.	Requirement	Due date
30 (2001)	notify Ofsted without delay if any of the relevant events listed in column 1 of the table in Schedule 5 takes place. In particular, this relates to any serious incident necessitating calling the police to the home (Regulation 30(1))	06/06/2013
16 (2001)	ensure the home's policy intended to safeguard children accommodated in the home from abuse is fully implemented. In particular, ensure that allegations against staff are reported to the local authority designated officer (LADO). (Regulation 16(1))	06/06/2013

Recommendations

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

- ensure that any measure of physical restraint is carefully recorded with full details by the staff involved in the record kept for this purpose (Volume 5, statutory guidance, paragraph 2.91)
- ensure the use of restraint is in line with relevant government guidance. In particular, obtain appropriate multi-disciplinary agreement in advance regarding the use of planned physical interventions, as set out in Guidance for Restrictive Physical Interventions (DH/DfES 2002). (NMS 3.14)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

The young people living at this home have very diverse needs and capabilities but all benefit from the good levels of individual care, support and guidance they receive. A young person said living at the home is 'awesome'.

Young people receive good support to attend their schools, college and training

placements. Overall, they make positive progress from their starting points when they move into the home. Young people also engage in a broad range of positive and enjoyable activities such as swimming and badminton. They make good progress in developing self-care skills and also, where appropriate, skills they will need as an adult. Staff ensure young people's achievements are recognised and celebrated which builds their self-esteem and confidence.

Young people participate in decisions about their care and plans for their future. They confirm they know what is in their placement plan and that their views and wishes are taken into account. Young people also have a say in how the home is run. For example, there are regular young people's meetings where they can help plan menus and activities and outings. Each Sunday they also complete their individual activity plan for the week with staff. It is evident that staff take young people's views into account.

Young people are generally in good health and are cared for by staff who actively promote their health. They receive positive guidance and support to make informed choices about all aspects of their wellbeing. This includes how to stop engaging in risk-taking behaviour, such as going missing, and young people have made progress in this regard. Staff have very good links with a range of health professionals which enables young people to access the support they need to lead a healthy lifestyle. This also helps ensure that any concerns can be addressed quickly. However, some young people choose not to accept the support and continue to put their health at risk, for example, by smoking.

Young people benefit from appropriate contact with family members and friends. They also receive good support from staff to understand and cope with any emotional distress such contact can sometimes cause. Staff are also good at assisting young people to gain an understanding about their individual circumstances and background so that they develop a sense of identity.

Quality of care

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

Staff are very good at developing positive relationships with the young people. Young people say they get on well with staff, and professionals also confirm this. A social worker said a young person had 'excellent relationships' with some staff. Young people said there are staff they can talk to if they have any worries or concerns. Staff are very child focused and it is evident they value young people views and wishes. They actively consult them about their day-to-day living and how they are cared for. Young people know how to make a complaint if they are unhappy about something. The home has received no complaints since the last inspection.

Improving outcomes for young people is a clear priority for staff. This is evident in the way they actively address any barriers to young people's education and training. Staff endeavour to encourage and support young people to attend school or training placements regularly and most young people have made progress in this respect.

Staff maintain very regular contact with young people's educational and training placements so that any concerns or issues can be dealt with quickly. This helps to support young people's continuing attendance and achievement.

Staff try ensuring the diverse needs of the young people are clearly recorded in their individual placement plans. These plans have been developed to identify clear measureable outcomes for each young person. This means staff and young people more effectively evaluate the success of these plans.

Staff are very good at advocating on behalf of young people, for example, to enable them to access appropriate health care treatments. They are also very good at working in partnership with social workers and other agencies. This helps ensure young people's needs are met and that services are tailored to their individual and diverse needs and circumstances. Where appropriate, staff also work well with young people's families, which helps to ensure continuity of care as well as good outcomes for the young people.

Staff place a strong value on making positive relationships with young people and work constructively to reduce the incidents of negative behaviour. One of the ways they do this is by trying to enable young people to understand the impact of their behaviour on others. Over their time at the home, young people do make progress in reducing negative behaviour.

There are effective arrangements for making sure staff have the relevant skills and knowledge to meet young people's diverse health needs. There are good arrangements for storing, administering and monitoring the young people's medication. For example, only staff who have had training in safety with medicines can administer medication to young people. These arrangements help safeguard young people's health and welfare.

The home is decorated, furnished and maintained to a good standard and is a comfortable, homely place. Young people have their own rooms and are able to personalise these.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Staff try very hard to protect and promote young people's welfare and they are clear about their roles and responsibilities in doing so. They take prompt and appropriate action when young people place themselves at risk and overall ensure the home's safeguarding procedures and risk assessments are implemented. However, on one occasion staff did not fully implement the home's child protection procedures in relation to an allegation made by a young person. Although they had informed relevant professionals, including the young person's social worker, they omitted to inform the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), who is responsible for overseeing the investigation of all allegations. Following this inspection, staff did inform the LADO.

Staff have had training in countering bullying and they have written guidance to follow to try to minimise the risk of bullying to any young person living in the home. Staff are alert to potential bullying and provide the necessary support. Young people say staff deal with any incidents of bullying.

The home has a protocol to follow if young people go missing that has been agreed with the police. Staff also have good working relationships with the police and other professionals to minimise the risk to young people who go missing, or fail to return to the home at the agreed time. These help keep young people safe. Staff try to help them understand the risks to their safety and welfare. Overall, the frequency of young people going missing has reduced over their time at the home.

Staff are good at supporting and encouraging young people to develop positive behaviour and social skills. They ensure good behaviour is rewarded and, if they use sanctions, these are relevant and reasonable. Staff only use physical restraint on young people to keep them or others safe or to prevent serious damage to property.. However, some of the details relating to two incidents had not been recorded in the home's restraint record book. Instead these details were recorded on separate sheets stapled to the restraint log book which is not tamper-proof and therefore an insecure record.

The home ensures young people's social workers receive up-to-date copies of their risk management plans which include reference to behaviour management strategies used by staff. They are asked to sign these to confirm their agreement. However, the home does not meet government guidance regarding the use of physical interventions which recommends that, where the use of physical intervention is planned, pre-arranged strategies and methods should be agreed in advance by the multi-disciplinary team working with the young person.

The provider has clear and robust staff recruitment and selection procedures and ensures these are implemented. These help make sure only suitable people are employed to care for the young people.

Young people live in a home that is safe and secure. For example, there are suitable systems to identify and minimise any risks or hazards and staff and young people take part in regular fire drills.

Leadership and management

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

The home has a Statement of Purpose that provides clear, accessible information about how it operates. It is child focused and clearly sets out how young people will be cared for. The management team ensures the home is run in line with its Statement of Purpose. For example, they ensure all staff working at the home consistently follow its policies and procedures and understand their roles and responsibilities.

The manager is suitably qualified and very experienced. This enables them to provide good leadership and effective management of the home. They ensure the home has a clear ethos and staff work with commonly understood objectives. The staff team say they have good support from the management team in relation to their work and professional development. This helps them provide good outcomes for the young people.

The manager took appropriate action to address the four recommendations made at the last inspection. The use of sanctions to address young people's poor behaviour has reduced. Staff do not now routinely lock the kitchen to prevent young people gaining access without permission. They adopt more appropriate approaches to managing any potential risks which may be associated with some young people using the kitchen. Records of young people going missing now include details of the action staff have taken to safeguard the young person when they return. The home's safeguarding policy now includes written guidance and procedures in relation to e-safety. This will help staff safeguard and promote the welfare of the young people.

The registered person failed to notify Ofsted of a serious incident on one occasion. Consequently, the regulator was unable to monitor the action taken by the home regarding this incident, and the outcome. Also, there has been a delay in providing Ofsted with notifications regarding some serious incidents.

Most staff are well qualified and are very experienced in caring for young people. They are committed to meeting young people's diverse needs and strive to promote good outcomes for them. They have access to good training opportunities in caring for children and young people. Staff also receive good support and supervision. This helps them to have a good understanding of young people's needs and how to support them and keep them safe. Staff confirm that supervision helps them in their work with the young people.

Staffing levels are very good and enable staff to spend time meeting the young people's individual needs. Staff and young people are involved in activities in the local community.

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.