

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Sharron Escott
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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 home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to four young people of either gender, aged from 10 to 17 years, with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Overall effectiveness

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

Young people enjoy a satisfactory standard of care in a supportive environment; most appear confident and self-assured. The staff demonstrate a commitment to young people, clearly understand their varying needs and pay attention to these, allowing and encouraging young people to develop meaningful productive relationships with mutual respect and trust.

There are good systems in place to protect and promote young people's health, welfare and emotional well-being. There is evidence that young people make good progress in relation to their starting point on admission to the home. Young people say that they feel safe and report they are not subject to any bullying. Staffing levels are good, and the staff team work well together, which has a positive impact on young people

Areas identified for improvement at this inspection are: involving children in the monitoring processes of the home, taking their views into account; ensuring sanctions are clear, reasonable and fair; and staffing of the home having a more proportionate gender balance to meet the current needs of children in placement.

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 views of the young person, the young person's family, social worker and IRO are sought regularly on the young person's care (NMS 1.4)
- ensure sanctions for behaviour are clear, reasonable and fair (NMS 3.8)
- ensure the staff group who are in day-to-day contact with children includes staff of both genders whenever possible. (NMS 17.10)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

The staff team are committed to providing children and young people with an individualised care and support package designed to focus on their achievements and abilities to enable them to reach their full potential. It is evident that young people have made good progress in managing their own behaviour, increasing social skills and making safer choices. These skills have promoted young people's self-esteem and have enabled them to feel more confident.

Young people enjoy good health and their needs are identified, supported and addressed. Individual needs are documented within placement plans. The staff team are proactive in identifying and attempting to secure the services of specialist professionals in order to improve the quality of young people's health and emotional well-being. The staff team are successful in working with children and young people who display challenging behavioural needs.

Young people enjoy a healthy life style, they are encouraged to choose the food they like and activity planners include opportunities for young people to take regular exercise. Meals are taken around the table and provide opportunities to enjoy a social occasion while developing self-help and independence skills.

Young people are enrolled and attend full-time education. Education plans and individual learning plans are tailored to meet the level of understanding and ability of the young people. The home promotes consistent communication between schools and the home. Key workers have a good understanding of young people's educational needs and work in partnership with the schools and college to ensure that the young people's changing needs are reviewed. As a result the young people are clear what their targets are and what they are achieving.

Young people enjoy activities both in the home and out in the community. Surveys completed by the young people include a request for additional free time to spend with friends and a request for additional resources in the home's games room. Young people have individualised activity planners that promote opportunities for them to maintain friendships and enjoy activities within the community.

The home works in partnership with families and significant others to ensure that young people maintain positive and frequent contact. A strength of the service is developing, maintaining and managing contact, ensuring young people are given a high level of support.

Quality of care

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

Young people achieve in the supportive environment; they feel able to raise any concern which they may have directly with staff and are confident that their concern

will be given due consideration. Group and individual work with young people helps them to understand why it may not be possible to act upon their wishes on every occasion. The culture within the home of open discussion and opinions provides young people with opportunities to explore their thoughts and identify any prejudices that they may hold. Staff encourage young people to embrace diversity by sharing their differing personal perspectives and by showing their tolerance and acceptance of differing views.

Staff have high aspirations for each young person, irrespective of the challenges that they present. Care practices are tailored to meet individual needs while also taking into account the needs of the group. Staff work flexibly and respond promptly to young people's presenting needs; achievements are praised and celebrated and mistakes are accepted and discussed with young people in key-worker meetings, which helps them learn from their errors of judgement.

Young people are consulted verbally about their daily living choices. Young people say they are confident to express their concerns to staff, however, their views, wishes and feelings could not be identified within the home's records, resulting in the young people not always being clear that these have been considered and acted upon. The home is not creative in exploring formal processes to enable young people to express their views.

The home is surrounded by fields and outbuildings, providing ample outdoor areas for ball games and relaxation. The accommodation provides reception rooms to allow young people to engage in indoor activities that include the use of consoles. Furnishings and décor are of a good standard and there is an ongoing development plan for further improvements to the service. Young people's bedrooms are personalised to their own tastes.

The home has been proactive in establishing and maintaining good working relationships with the local police, neighbours and agencies that can support the varying needs of young people.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

The home has good systems in place to ensure that children and young people's welfare is protected and promoted. Young people stated they feel safe and secure within the home. Bullying is not an issue within the home; staff are quick to identify any areas of concern such as inappropriate comments.

Staff set clear consistent boundaries which sufficiently help young people to understand the consequences for their behaviour. However, the frequent use of sanctions that are predominately financial indicates that these are not effective or individualised to meet the needs of the young people.

All visitors to the home are monitored because they are required to provide evidence

of their identity and to sign a visitors' book. These systems protect young people as they ensure that unauthorised individuals are not able to gain access to the home.

The environment is physically safe and appropriately secure, taking account of the needs and characteristics of the young people cared for. All young people have their own individual room, which promotes their right to privacy and personal space. Staff manage health and safety well. Detailed risk assessments and fire safety checks are undertaken to promote safety and well-being. This is underpinned by policies, procedures and training that alert staff to their roles and levels of responsibility. As a result, young people benefit from a safe environment and this has a positive impact upon their welfare.

Care staff receive regular safeguarding training and concerns about the welfare of young people are managed appropriately. The manager is the designated person with responsibility for managing safeguarding concerns and provides a good source of knowledge and support.

Restraint records evidence high levels of restraint used. However, the frequency of restraints has significantly reduced and is wholly associated to one individual who is no longer placed at the home. The significant reduction clarifies that daily practice promotes intervention being used as a last resort to keep young people safe.

A missing from home protocol has been established. Care staff are provided with information and procedures to follow to safeguard young people when they are missing from home.

Leadership and management

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

The home is managed by a suitably qualified and experienced manager who has the support and respect of the staff team. Senior staff keep up to date with new information and legislation and this is shared with the team through regular meetings. Staff talk positively about the support they receive and confirm that supervision, appraisal and team meetings are carried out on a regular basis and enable them to reflect on their practice and relationships with young people. Staff members refer to themselves as a 'team' who are well supported by management.

Staff undertake induction, regulatory and service specific training which provides them with skills, knowledge and competencies required to meet the needs of the young people. It is evident that staff access good quality training that enhances individual skills, and keeps them up to date with professional and legal developments.

The home has a detailed Statement of Purpose that outlines the services it offers; this is regularly reviewed and accessible to the young people, parents and social workers. The young person's guide is detailed and age-appropriate.

The home is resourced well to ensure young people have good staffing ratios. The staff team are enthusiastic about their work and their commitment to supporting young people in staying safe and achieving good outcomes. The gender balance in the team is currently disproportionate; the manager has recognised this and is looking at alternative ways to have a proportionate gender balance.

There are good monitoring activities related to the quality of care provided to young people. For example, the manager regularly monitors the quality of care given to young people and any emerging patterns and trends. Record keeping is generally very good with robust systems in place to monitor the development and progress of young people. Weekly summaries contribute towards care plan objectives and subsequently statutory reviews. Monthly visits by a designated person have also been occurring. The home's office is well organised, information is kept up to date and professional recordings are made. Records are held securely in a locked office.

All previous recommendations have been met. The manager now ensures that the details of restraint are recorded in a dedicated bound book; the fire risk assessment identifies when fire drills are undertaken; and continuity of staffing is reflected within the home's staffing rota.

Equality and diversity practice is **satisfactory**.