

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Brian Mcquoid
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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

The service is a family-run children's home providing care and accommodation for up to three young people between the ages of 10 and 18 years. The home provides a specialist service for young people who require highly individualised care and specialist mental health support. High staffing levels provide structure and support within a child-centred environment and a systemic approach is used to address the complex behaviours young people present.

The premises reflect a family type environment with all young people having their own rooms, plenty of communal space, a large garden, and easy access to community facilities.

Overall effectiveness

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

Young people benefit from personalised care which addresses their individual needs and which successfully promotes positive outcomes for them. The quality of relationships between staff and young people is extremely good and young people are being listened to by staff. The home provides a child-centred environment within which young people feel safe and where they are provided with individual support whenever they need it. Staff have a good understanding of safe working practice and do all they can to keep young people safe at all times. There are very good working relationships with external agencies which benefit young people and the service is rated highly by placing authorities. The manager of the home has a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the service and is clear about future plans but does not have a written development plan in place. The manager also acknowledges the need to improve the provision for staff learning and development.

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 home has a written development plan for the future of the service, and which is regularly reviewed (NMS 15.2)
- develop a good quality learning and development programme which staff are supported to undertake. (NMS 18.1)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

The home is achieving positive outcomes for young people. They are being successfully supported to feel good about themselves, to have increased levels of confidence, to decrease risk taking behaviours and to develop positive and socially acceptable behaviours. 'Staff have helped me a lot since being here' was a comment received from a young person and one placing social worker reported feeling 'gobsmacked' at the progress one young person had made. Young people are achieving extremely good attendance levels at their education placements and are making very good progress in relation to their starting points upon arrival. Staff routinely consult with young people about matters affecting them and young people feel 'listened to'. There is a good understanding about the importance of leading healthy lifestyles and staff have worked closely with external agencies to achieve positive outcomes in this area for young people. Successfully helping young people to give up smoking is one example.

Young people enjoy very regular contact with their families, and staff provide the necessary support to ensure this happens. Staff routinely encourage young people to assist with tasks around the home and are implementing an independence programme for one young person designed to provide them with life skills in preparation for some degree of independent living.

Quality of care

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

The home provides a good quality of care. Young people enjoy positive and constructive relationships with staff and are encouraged and supported to make positive developments in their lives. The views of young people are actively sought and they are able to talk freely to staff about any problems or concerns that they might have. 'It's really lovely here, I get on well with all of the staff and trust them all', was a comment from one young person. Placing social workers confirmed that young people are being cared for in accordance with their individual placement plans and commented extremely positively about the care being provided. 'I am very impressed with the organisation' was one comment received. Young people are provided with child friendly care plans.

Staff successfully encourage young people to adopt healthy lifestyles and ensure they have access to the services and support they need to meet their physical, emotional and psychological health needs. Young people enjoy healthy home-made food, are encouraged to exercise regularly and have lots of opportunities to do things that they enjoy doing. The home is proactive in seeking educational provision for young people that meets their needs and young people are achieving excellent levels of attendance.

The home provides an environment that is well suited to its purpose. The accommodation is of a very good standard and being well maintained. Young people have their own rooms; there is ample communal space, a large garden, and very good access to community facilities.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

The home provides a safe and suitably secure environment for young people within which they feel safe. Staff have a good understanding of their safeguarding responsibilities and do all they can to protect young people from harm at all times. Policies and procedures promote safe working practice and placing social workers reported feeling that young people are very safe at the home. Staff work very closely with external agencies to help minimise risks to young people and liaise effectively with the police when incidents of young people going missing occur. Young people report very positively on the support they have received to successfully reduce the frequency of such incidents.

Staff encourage and support young people in developing positive and socially acceptable behaviours, with challenging behaviour being successfully managed without the need for physical intervention. Observations saw staff use the strengths of relationships, humour and distraction techniques to diffuse potentially difficult situations. The use of sanctions is at a very low level. Young people feel fairly treated with one saying, 'staff sit me down and talk to me about things'. One placing social worker reported there to be, 'a friendly and relaxed feel about the home'.

Staff recruitment procedures meet requirements and are being consistently and fully implemented. The service has made changes to its practice as a result of a recent child protection investigation and is providing appropriate safeguards for the welfare of young people.

Leadership and management

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

The home was registered with Ofsted in November 2011 and first became operational in April 2011. This was the first inspection of the service. The home is being effectively managed and is adequately resourced to meet the needs of young people being cared for. There is a clear commitment to providing a high standard of individualised care for young people who require intensive support and the aims and objectives of the service are being well met in this respect. The Statement of Purpose for the home is comprehensive and placing authorities are very clear about the home and the service it provides. One placing officer for a local authority commented that the provider was 'the best provider we have' and that the management was 'very robust'. The manager of the home is very aware of the home's strengths and weaknesses however there is currently no written development plan in place for the service.

Young people are cared for by a committed and enthusiastic staff group who thoroughly enjoy their work and who are clearly competent in meeting the needs of the young people they care for. Observations showed young people enjoy very positive relationships with the staff group and comments were received to support this view. There are always enough staff on duty to meet young people's needs and staff comment very favourably on the support they receive which includes regular group supervision. Staff complete sufficient training which enables them to provide good quality and safe care for young people; however there is no clearly structured and good quality learning and development programme in place for staff. This shortfall was acknowledged by the manager of the service.

The service has established and positive relationships with external agencies which include the police, health services, and placing authorities. Regulation 33 visits take place regularly and there are effective monitoring systems in operation within the home.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.