

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Caroline Oldham
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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 home provides care and accommodation for two young people of either gender, who present emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Overall effectiveness

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

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This was an unannounced full inspection that has assessed all the outcome areas as meeting the needs of young people to an outstanding standard. The home provides highly individualised packages of care carefully designed to meet the specific needs of each young person. Staff draw up personalised care plans, which are frequently reviewed and updated. Young people are actively involved in their reviews and encouraged to take notes and ask questions. Key working, life story work and other opportunities are all used to work towards clear aims and objectives, and all staff are confident about improving outcomes for young people. They have high aspirations and work towards clear goals to help young people continuously improve and make exceptional progress.

The young people speak very highly about the quality of care in the home. They are fully involved in the running of the home including through regular young people's meetings and opportunities to attend parts of staff meetings. They are able to influence colour schemes, activities, menus and most aspects of the daily running of the home. Young people say that they like all of the staff team and miss them when they are on holiday.

The manager has a thorough understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the home and has developed a very detailed development plan. This is regularly reviewed and updated. In addition, the manager occasionally also works on shift and has a very good understanding of the operational issues as well as a more strategic overview.

Staff are extremely well supported by the manager, and receive regular high quality supervision and the organisation provides comprehensive training. Staff are diligent and focused in their care; they provide an environment that is fun and active while also setting clear boundaries about behaviour and expectations.

Young people say unequivocally that they feel happy and safe in their home. They are kept safe through good risk assessments, and staff help young people understand the dangers that they may place themselves in by some of their

behaviours. Staff have a very good understanding of safeguarding issues and consistently review safe working practices to ensure they meet individual young people's needs.

No recommendations have been made on this occasion.

Areas for improvement

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Quality of care

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

Young people clearly enjoy positive and constructive relationships with all of the staff team. Staff speak enthusiastically and with warmth about the young people and have high aspirations and hopes for them. Young people behave exceptionally well and respond to the positive feedback from staff. They like the various financial incentive schemes and the positive comment certificates; they display these with pride.

Young people significantly influence the running of the home through well-managed meetings and discussions with staff. For example young people chose the colour of the living room walls, pictures and ornaments and how they spend their free time. They like the notice boards for displaying their work and posters and documentation relating to issues that affect them.

Staff are very skilled at helping young people understand why it may not be possible to act upon their wishes and set clear limits in place. Young people said they understand why sometimes staff have to say no, however, often a compromise can be reached through careful negotiation. This opportunity for discussion and reflection is a valuable skill for young people to learn as they grow up.

Young people are given a clearly written guide when they are first admitted to the home; this includes the complaints procedure. Complaints information is also displayed on the notice boards. Young people feel confident to make complaints and say that they feel listened to and that their views are taken into consideration. Recent documentation has also been introduced to capture informal grumbles, such as the preferred flavour of cordial. This open and transparent system shows that young people are taken seriously at every level, and their views influence the running of the home and their care.

There are detailed placement and care plans for the young people and these include consideration of their cultural background and personal identity. Plans detail the specific, individual needs of the young person and where appropriate their religious and cultural needs and interests. Where young people have specific needs these are

met through, for example, purchasing Halal meat and offering attendance at a required place of worship. Staff review the placement plan when they see some new or different behaviour in the young person. They look at strategies and revise the plan. All staff are made aware of this through handovers, staff meetings and the daily log book. For example the incentive scheme was revised when it was noted that it was not being effective and a new approach introduced. Key working is given a high priority and young people have two key workers who undertake fortnightly sessions with them. The work covers a broad range of areas as defined in the placement plan and staff have various approaches to ensure the work is engaging and purposeful for the young people. This helps young people to stay safe and to make changes to their behaviour.

The home provides a very healthy environment and staff are highly committed to ensuring that all the young people's needs are met; including their medical and psychological needs. Young people are actively involved in choosing the weekly menu and helping with the shopping. Menus demonstrate opportunities to try new dishes and show plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables in the daily diet of the young people. Regular opportunity for physical activities are incorporated into daily living whether this is in the form of household chores, or activities such as boxing and horse riding.

Young people are actively involved in planning their time, including their free time. They enjoy spending time around the home, baking; gardening; playing board games; listening to music and watching DVDs. They also enjoy day trips out and hobbies such as fitness activities, go-karting and horse riding.

The home and surrounding grounds are spacious, and very well maintained. There is an ongoing programme of redecoration and maintenance. The location enables young people to access local shops and services and larger towns are a car journey away. Young people are actively encouraged to personalise their bedrooms by painting the walls and choosing their own bedding and curtains. Much of this is promoted through an incentive scheme and young people fully engage in this and enjoy the gradual acquisition of soft furnishings and other items. They take responsibility for cleaning their bedrooms, managing their laundry, helping with meals and sharing household chores. Young people have keys to their rooms if they wish and their files are kept securely locked.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

There are comprehensive and detailed complaints and representations policy and procedures. Young people are aware and confident about making a complaint and know their concerns will be acted upon. They say with confidence that they feel safe in the home.

Staff all receive training in the child protection procedures and have a good working

knowledge of what to do if an allegation is made against a member of staff. Staff now have access to the latest local safeguarding children board's procedures. Staff ensure that there are comprehensive individual risk assessments for each young person, and they are regularly updated as situations change. There are policies on lone working and also risk assessments in place regarding this.

Protocols are in place for when young people go missing; these have been reviewed with the local police to make them more effective. There has been a significant reduction in young people being absent without permission. When this has occurred the duration has also significantly reduced. This demonstrates the imaginative approach of the home to address problems and achieve significant progress with potentially high risk behaviours of the young people. When young people return to the home they are well supported and treated with care and sensitivity. The home works closely with the police, the Local Authority Designated Officer and others, to build up good channels of communication and support. This ensures that the welfare of the young people remains paramount and young people are kept safe at the home.

Young people think that the rules of the home are fair and that good behaviour is rewarded and recognised. Staff work hard to provide consistent boundaries and expectations and young people respond very well to this approach. Physical restraint is a very rare occurrence and most behaviour can be managed through negotiation. The sanctions log demonstrates that emphasis is placed on working with the young person to think about the negative behaviour and to consider an appropriate sanction. This provides the young person with the opportunity to reflect on the damage caused or the danger that they have put themselves in; this is another example of excellent reflective practice. There have been no incidents of bullying, but information about this, including young people's work, is displayed in the hallway.

Staff files are retained centrally but each manager holds an updated list of Criminal Records Bureau information including the level of the check, the date of issue and the disclosure certificate number. There has been no recruitment to the home in recent months, however a head office audit shows that the organisation has, overall, very good systems to make a suitability decision. There is also evidence that poor performance is managed effectively. This ensures that all staff are suitable to work with young people and that they are kept safe from harm.

The environment is very well maintained and kept safe through a system of weekly and monthly internal safety checks and risk assessments. In addition, services such as electricity, electrical appliances and fire fighting equipment are regularly checked by the appropriate professional companies. Staff carry out much of the day-to-day maintenance and redecoration and they encourage young people to get involved in caring for their environment. Consequently the home is very well maintained. Fire drills are carried out regularly and when a new young person is admitted. Visitors to the home have their identification checked and they are signed in.

Leadership and management

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

The manager has been in post for one year and staff report that the home has gone from strength to strength, to provide a better quality service. There have been lots of new developments and staff are fully consulted and involved. The three recommendations from the last inspection have now been fully addressed. The latest copy of the local safeguarding board's procedures is now available in the home, all staff are appropriately qualified, or nearing the completion of their qualification and documented behaviour management plans for young people are available for all who need them.

The on-call system for this home and three others in the area has been improved by involving deputy managers in the rota. There is also a safeguarding on-call manager at a senior regional level. The manager has an annual development plan which is regularly reviewed and updated to show progress towards the goals. The organisation carries out monthly monitoring visits and these have recently been reviewed to improve the quality of the information. The manager also has a comprehensive system of internal audits. Appropriate and timely action is taken to notify the appropriate authorities and persons following significant events and incidents. Issues are followed through to ensure that young people are well supported and reoccurrence of events minimised.

Staff speak positively about their own development opportunities, the dedication and cohesiveness of the team, and their ability to actively contribute to the running of the home. They are sensitive to the needs of the young people and aware of their complex backgrounds. The staff team are persistent in their work to help young people make progress. There is a clear Statement of Purpose, which is regularly reviewed to reflect changes. It provides an accurate reflection of what the home provides. Placing authorities are clear about the aims and objectives of the home and what services and facilities it provides. Young people are very clear about the purpose of their placement in the home and their future plans, and they are actively involved in the review process. Staff are also clear about their roles, and how to access additional support for young people.

The home has sufficient staff for the current number of young people, although further recruitment is in progress. The organisation has other homes within the area, so, should the need arise, additional cover is provided by one of these homes. Appropriate risk assessments are made according to staffing levels and young people in placement.

Staff receive excellent training and records show that there is an on-going comprehensive programme including induction and mandatory training. All staff are now suitably qualified or completing their qualification. Supervision records indicate that all staff receive frequent supervision and staff say that they are able to seek advice and support when necessary. The manager confirms that she is well supported by senior management. The manager has excellent systems for amending and reviewing documentation within the home to ensure that it remains relevant, effective and up-to-date. The home is financially well resourced. A car is available for

use by the home and there are budgets available for general maintenance.

Care planning documents demonstrate that staff have a good awareness of meeting young people's individual needs. They are working documents that are reviewed and revised as progress is made. Documented behaviour management plans for young people now ensure that measures of control, discipline and restraint used by the home are made clear to the placing authority, the parents or carers and to the young person. All documentation is kept in a locked filing cabinet in a locked office.

Equality and diversity practice is **outstanding**.