

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 is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to two children aged between 12 years and 17-years-old who have emotional and behavioural difficulties. The home does not take emergency admissions.

Overall effectiveness

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

This was an unannounced full inspection that has assessed all the outcome areas as meeting the needs of young people to a good standard. Leaders and managers have a clear ethos for the home and a comprehensive business plan. The manager has very good monitoring oversight of the activities of the home. Staff and young people have good relationships and respect for one another, and staff also set clear boundaries about behaviour and expectations. Young people enjoy healthy lifestyles and take part in regular activities, fresh fruit and vegetables are on the menu daily.

The home provides packages of care designed to meet the individual needs of each young person. Young people have personalised care plans, which staff regularly review, update, and produce monthly progress reports. Staff are well supported by the local children and adolescent mental health services who attend fortnightly meetings to offer advice and guidance specific to young people. A comprehensive documentation system is in place, ensuring that records are cross checked and that important issues are discussed with young people in key working sessions. Some young people have just commenced semi-independence programmes but currently these do not have the same structured planning to demonstrate progress. However, overall young people are making very good progress in relation to their starting points across all areas of their welfare and development.

The young people speak highly about the quality of care in the home. They like the staff and their key work teams who support them. Young people said that they feel happy and secure in the home. They are kept safe through good risk assessments both for themselves and for the home. Staff have a good understanding of safeguarding issues and when young people express any concerns they are vigilant to follow these through appropriately.

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 children are well supported to prepare for moving into their own accommodation; develop practical skills; develop financial capability and knowledge about entitlements and support after leaving care (NMS 12.1)
- ensure that children develop their emotional, intellectual, social, creative and physical skills through the accessible and stimulating environment created by the home. (NMS 7.1)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people are admitted to the home following a comprehensive assessment at a sister home to ensure their suitability. Staff work closely with social workers and bring in external experts to offer advice and support in the care of each young person. Young people have individual placement plans, these are linked to the key work sessions to help young people make progress towards building up emotional resilience, self-esteem and knowledge and understanding of their backgrounds. Staff consider all aspects of the young people's health. Medication records show that medicines are rarely given and young people are in good health. They receive advice and support from external agencies to improve their health still further, such as by giving up smoking. Young people have bicycles which they use regularly and are encouraged to keep active and eat a balanced diet. Consequently young people are healthy and active and understand the importance of healthy lifestyles.

Young people are actively encouraged and supported to attend education and work experience opportunities. They have made significant progress in school attendance. They are rewarded for their efforts, and consequently young people are now committing to projects, work experience and attend far in excess of the minimum requirements. Their enthusiasm for work experiences is a real achievement. Staff support young people to look for college placements and apprenticeship schemes that appeal to the young person's individual interests. Current projects are integrating young people into the community in a voluntary capacity, and include fund raising activities and local garden maintenance.

The home is beautifully maintained and decorated. Young people take pride in the environment and personalise the home with photographs. Young people emphasise that it is just like any ordinary home and this is very important to them. They help with home improvements and they are allowed to keep pets. Young people also have regular meetings to express their wishes and feelings with regard to the day-to-day running of the home. They are integrated into the local community through senior management meetings with neighbours and also in the day-to-day neighbourliness such as borrowing tools and returning lost items.

Young people benefit from appropriate contact with family, friends and other people who are important to them. Young people are encouraged to bring their friends to visit the home, and where appropriate, they also welcome family members. Staff

have worked hard to re-establish contact with family members and to ensure that all contact arrangements conform to the planning agreement. Young people confirm that they have contact as agreed in their care plan.

Young people have just commenced a programme of independence training, but this programme does not fully demonstrate the range of life skills to prepare them for adult life. Consequently young people are not yet being fully prepared for the range of experiences they will face as young adults.

Quality of care

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

Young people feel that the house is their home, and feel a strong attachment to it and the staff team. Young people influence the day-to-day running of the home through formal meetings and day-to-day discussion. They clearly engage well with staff and show respect and consideration. Young people behave well and generally respond to the clear expectations and positive feedback from staff. If they do not behave well, which is a rare occurrence, they are actively involved in discussing what sanction or action is appropriate. They also help to repair damage or clear up any mess. Consequently young people are making considerable strides in the management of their behaviour and are very aware of the impact of their behaviour on other people.

Key work is drawn from the residential action plan and placement plans, and the key work team meet very regularly with the young person, both formally and informally, as opportunities arise. Young people have a say in who they wish to have as their key workers. Quarterly outcome reports demonstrate the significant progress that young people make towards their goals. For example, gaining confidence to go shopping without support, to use public transport and to treat members of the community with respect. Staff are well supported by the local children and adolescent mental health team who visit fortnightly to discuss and advise about the care of the young people. Consequently young people are making good progress in their development.

Staff are very skilled at helping young people understand why it may not be possible to act upon their wishes and to set clear limits in place. For example, they are told when there are financial constraints or when they have spent their allowances. They are encouraged to understand how something may need to be saved up for, or that there will need to be a decision about one purchase or another. Consequently young people are developing a more mature understanding of why certain wishes cannot be met.

Young people are given a welcome pack when they are first admitted to the home. This includes the complaints procedure. Young people said that they feel confident to make complaints and know about the forms to fill in. There have been no complaints from young people; they are very happy with the home. There have been a very small number from neighbours, when the home first opened, but these have all been

satisfactorily addressed, and regular meetings put in place to enhance communication to prevent further issues arising.

Detailed placement and care plans are in place and include young people's cultural background and personal identity. These detail the specific, individualised needs of the young person and where appropriate their religious and cultural needs and interests. Staff review the plans, produce monthly outcome reports and update the key work plan. Key working is given a high priority and may be a formal planned session or an opportune moment. This helps young people to understand their behaviours and to develop strategies for change.

The home provides a healthy environment and staff are committed to ensuring that all the young people's medical needs are met. In addition, staff encourage young people to take up additional specialist support according to their needs, such as giving up smoking. When a young person is admitted, they are registered with the local health professionals and all health needs are actively pursued. When appointments are refused, subsequent appointments are booked due to a comprehensive monitoring system. Young people are encouraged to take up recommendations such as wearing glasses. Young people regularly cycle and staff encourage and support them in activities such as camping and sailing. The menu demonstrates a balanced and healthy diet. Consequently young people enjoy good health.

Young people sometimes have had problems attending education. Staff have helped them turn this around to significantly improve their attendance. They support young people taking exams and liaise with schools. For those who have now left school, work experience opportunities and community involvement projects have been found, and young people are enthusiastically engaging with this work and attending far in excess of the minimum requirement. This is a significant achievement for young people. Staff work alongside young people to help them find appropriate college courses and apprenticeship schemes. They encourage self reliance but give enough guidance to help young people make good decisions.

The home offers a variety of activities for leisure time these include cinema, fishing, playing pool, bowling and DVDs. There is a very small selection of board games and books which limits the range of activities within the home. However, young people are active outside the home, for example, being a representative on the Children in Care Council and also being a member of the National Youth Council.

The home has recently opened and is very well decorated and maintained. Its location ensures that young people can easily use public transport or walk to local shops and the city centre. Young people personalise their bedrooms and display their photographs around the home. They are also allowed to keep small pets. In addition to cleaning their bedrooms and managing their laundry, young people are expected to help with housework and be involved in some meal preparation. There is an ethos of no locked doors but young people have keys to their bedrooms and their files are kept securely locked in a locked office.

Recently young people commenced an independence programme. This is still in its infancy and focuses mainly on purchasing food within a budget. This area of work lacks detailed structure to ensure young people develop skills in all areas to give them the life skills for adult life.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people say with confidence that they feel safe in the home. All staff receive training in child protection procedures and have a good working knowledge of what to do if an allegation is made against a member of staff. There are comprehensive individual risk assessments for each young person, and they are regularly updated as situations change. If young people go missing there are good procedures in place to notify the police and search for the young people. The home works closely with the police and has formulated protocols to ensure good channels of communication and support. Consequently young people are kept safe at the home.

Young people are actively involved in agreeing the rules, and if they break them, the sanctions. Clear expectations from staff, and consistent care, have enabled young people to significantly improve their behaviour. There have been no incidents of restraint, and this is a significant achievement. Young people are now aware of the impact of their behaviour on others, and try hard to behave well and manage their anger and upset. Bullying is well managed and anti-bullying plans are regularly reviewed for each young person. Assessment and management of risk documents are also in place to ensure that any potential bullying is managed. For example, through good staffing levels and sensitive monitoring of the whereabouts of the young people.

There has been no recruitment to the home since it opened. However, there are rigorous selection and induction processes in place. After a detailed application, there are formal interviews which include two questions from young people. If an offer of employment is made, Criminal Records Bureau checks and references; both written and verbal, are taken up. Proof of qualifications is also checked. This ensures that all staff are suitable to work with young people and they are kept safe from harm.

The environment is very well maintained and kept safe through a comprehensive 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. Where appropriate staff encourage young people to get involved in caring for their environment. Consequently the home is very well maintained. Fire drills are carried out regularly, including night time evacuations. Visitors to the home are checked for identification, they are signed in.

Leadership and management

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

This is the first inspection since registration and therefore there are no requirements or recommendations from the last inspection.

The leaders and managers have established a good ethos for the home, which works in partnership with a 'sister' home nearby. The day-to-day manager is well supported by the senior management team. There is a clear Statement of Purpose, this is reviewed to keep it up-to-date and relevant. It provides an accurate reflection of the home's aims and objectives. There is a corporate development plan which includes this home and from this performance indicators are drawn down for staff teams and individual members of staff. The organisation carries out comprehensive monthly monitoring visits. There is also a good system of internal audits.

Young people are very clear about the purpose of their placement in the home and their future plans. Each young person has a paper file which contains detailed plans and documents. In addition, some records are kept electronically. For example, running records are kept electronically on a secure, password protected, intranet which allows social workers to also get daily updates and assess progress. Placing authorities confirm that they are clear about the aims and objectives of the home and the services and facilities it provides. Social workers say they like the targeted, individual support, and young people have good relationships with their key workers. Staff are also clear about their roles, and how to access additional support for young people. They demonstrate a good awareness of the complexity of the backgrounds of the young people and are focused to help young people make progress and succeed in their ambitions.

The manager confirms that the home is financially well resourced. It is part of an overall strategy to provide planned care following a residential assessment at a 'sister' unit. Budgets are sufficient to provide for the needs of the young people. Good use is made of additional support where appropriate, for example, during school holidays.

The home is fully staffed to meet the needs of the current young people. Should the need arise, additional cover can be provided by another home in the area. Staff confirmed that levels are always sufficient to keep young people safe and rotas support this. There are lone working policies and risk assessments in place to ensure that when staff work alone, the young people are kept safe. All staff are suitably qualified, receive induction training, and participate in an ongoing programme of mandatory training and refresher courses. Supervision records indicate that all staff receive regular supervision, and staff say that they are able to seek advice and support when necessary. Care planning documents demonstrate that staff have a good awareness of meeting young people's individual needs. There are working documents which contain clear detail and planning; they are reviewed as progress is made. Files are audited monthly by the manager. All documentation is kept in a locked filing cabinet in a locked office.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.

