

Inspection report for children's home

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<b>Inspector</b>	Christy Wannop
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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.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcome for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and relevant National Minimum Standards for the establishment.

## The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding:	this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality
Good:	this aspect of the provision is strong
Satisfactory:	this aspect of the provision is sound
Inadequate:	this aspect of the provision is not good enough

## **Service information**

### **Brief description of the service**

The home is run by a county council and provides care and support to seven young people who have emotional and behavioural difficulties. The age range of the young people cared for is from 11 to 18 years old. Five beds are allocated for permanent residential use. One bed is for the purpose of very short-term emergency admissions, with the other bed providing a leaving care provision.

The main accommodation for the young people is on the ground floor. There is a first floor annexe which provides self-contained accommodation for one of the seven young people to experience living independently. The home is situated in a busy residential area on the outskirts of a large town centre and young people have easy access to a range of community facilities.

There were six young people living in the home at the time of the visit, and three young people contributed to the inspection.

### **Summary**

This was an unannounced key inspection. It focused on key standards under each Every Child Matters outcome group, plus organisation. It followed up on actions and recommendations made at the last key inspection in February 2010, when the service was judged as inadequate. This inspection found the service to be much improved and makes five recommendations, largely about matters already identified by the manager for action. This is a well-organised service that provides good outcomes for children. It has significant strengths in collaborative working that promotes welfare. Coordinated work with partners in health, education and the police keeps children safe and well. Good health is promoted, children are secure, and education and leisure are valued. Individual differences are recognised and diversity is celebrated. Staff are well trained and supported; they are experienced and make good relationships with children. The environment is a good one for children to live in. Management is stable and effective.

The overall quality rating is good.

This is an overview of what the inspector found during the inspection.

### **Improvements since the last inspection**

The manager has taken prompt action to meet the seven regulatory failures from the last inspection. She has taken action to meet the majority of the shortfalls against minimum standards.

Previous failings were found in the areas of recording of complaints, lack of knowledge about, and policy and procedure for, safeguarding, and poor notifications to Ofsted. The manager has strengthened practice and procedure in all these areas. Complaints are now well logged and monitored through regular monthly audits. Staff at all levels have had training in safeguarding, there are now in-house procedures, and guidance for staff has been improved in accessible flow charts detailing responsibilities. The manager now ensures that all serious incidents are initiated and concluded to Ofsted in proper notifications. Staff had previously used financial penalties as sanctions. Children confirm that staff may supervise what they spend their money on, but it is no longer withheld as a sanction. Policy and guidance about this is clear. Management monitoring had failed to pick up these significant issues. The manager has improved

systems to review the quality of care and has taken action where needed to make the changes necessary to improve children's experience of care.

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is good.

Parents and young people say there are good arrangements for promoting health and promoting healthy lifestyles and choices. Food is good, plentiful and nutritious and there is a positive approach to making sure that dietary needs on religious or cultural grounds are well catered for. Children live in a clean environment, and their health needs are known to staff who make sure services are provided to meet them. There are good arrangements for administration of medication, and well-organised systems for making sure that children get the first aid and health treatment they need. Parents confirm that medication is safely stored and administered and that their children's health is well managed.

### **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is good.

There are stronger systems to ensure that children are safe and sound through training, policy and procedure. Privacy is respected, and children and parents confirm this. Complaints are well documented and taken seriously, and most children's complaints are sorted out at an early stage. Staff promote children's welfare and protect them from harm. They now have good training and plentiful guidance, specific to the home, about what to do in the event of an allegation or suspicion of abuse. The manager has been proactive in identifying and securing proper consideration of safeguarding issues with the local authority. She has yet to submit the new service specific safeguarding procedure to the Local Safeguarding Children Board for their consideration and comment as recommended in the previous inspection. While it is not yet clear whether these accord with interagency procedures, the Local Safeguarding Children Board confirm that practice protects children.

Bullying does sometimes happen but staff give a clear message to young people that it is unacceptable. They are alert to the possibility and impact of bullying and take action to reduce the harmful impact of this. Children do run away and keeping them safe is a significant challenge for the service. There has been extensive partnership working with other agencies to establish robust protocols within the local area. This includes exhaustive negotiations and agreements for individual children to minimise the risk of harm and maximise opportunities for a safe return by maintaining all channels of communication by daily phone contact. Children do have behaviour that challenges, but staff encourage responsibility and calm attitudes and apply well thought out constructive responses. Young people were clear about the fairness of consequences and sanctions. A parent commented that staff manage incidents promptly to instantly diffuse challenging situations. She says the children's good behaviour evidences the positive respectful relationships between staff and children.

The manager takes effective action to make sure that children live in a home that provides physical safety and security, free from unnecessary risks. A parent commented on the good arrangements to promote personal safety, manage trips, and said that staff are always aware of children's whereabouts. The manager is aware of the need to extend and improve the system of formal written risk assessments to cover the home's environment and grounds. The home had previously not made good enough arrangements about fire safety. These are improved but still lack clarity in documentation. Guidance for staff about the practice of wedging fire doors

open is still not sufficiently clear in the home's fire risk assessment and so unfamiliar staff may not know when, which, and for how long doors can be held open in this way.

Children are safeguarded from abuse by satisfactory procedures for selecting and vetting all staff and volunteers. The manager makes sure that she asks each referee about suitability to work with children, but this is not yet part of the organisation's formal routine procedures for safe recruitment and so the recommendation is made for the second time. There is close monitoring of visitors to ensure safety for all.

## **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is good.

Children receive good individual support. Staff are sensitive and fully informed about young people's individual needs and wishes. They give help and make available written guidance about personal matters, including health, sex and relationships. There is good liaison with other agencies to meet children's wider needs and staff make sure that those who need specialist support for emotional health needs can access this. The service has established much good practice in providing respectful, inclusive and well-informed care for children of different cultural, religious and racial heritages. Staff carefully consider the risks that children face and make active risk management plans that promote independence and balance safety.

Education is valued and children are well supported to achieve according to their ability. There is constructive home/school liaison and good facilities for homework and private study. Internet use is safely managed. A parent commented that staff encourage and enable children to do well at school and catch up with studies, through private tuition if needed.

Children said they can pursue individual interests, like electronic games, learning keyboard, trips out, riding bikes and the cinema. Staff support and encourage them to engage in leisure activities because they want them to get the most out of life and enjoy recreation. One parent acknowledged the struggle to get young people involved and to build relationships when they do not want to engage. Another parent talked positively about the quality of activities and financial support to pursue skills and hobbies. During the inspection children were busy with staff and not bored.

## **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is good.

Good assessment and admission processes mean that children are appropriately placed. One parent commented that after only a few weeks, there was already an improvement in her child's behaviour. The manager confidently manages the admission of children in an emergency to ensure that there is minimal disruption to the lives of children placed for a longer time. Placement plans are of good quality, and give a picture of each child's past and their present needs. Children and parents were very satisfied with the support they receive from key workers and the home. However, children's records do not always show the quality, level or frequency of practical direct work with children or how this links with the placement objectives. Records show how staff respond, rather than plan to provide adult guidance about significant issues in their lives. The service contributes well to the formal reviewing process and makes sure that changes to any plan are implemented.

Staff provide sensitive support to children to help them maintain constructive relationships with families, particularly when disappointment leads to distress. There is a good history of positive partnership working with families, professionals and in involving children throughout difficult decisions. Parents acknowledge the level and quality of communication from key workers. There are good mechanisms for consultation. Children have contact with advocates and children's rights workers; there are regular children's meetings about their care and the way the home is run, written surveys, and a new 'post box' for them to post their concerns, suggestions and complaints. One parent said of the approach to care, 'I feel they have the balance just perfect,' and is pleased to be able to visit often and see improvements and how well her child has settled.

## **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is good.

Children receive care and active support that helps them to prepare for adulthood. The manager and staff instil a strong work ethic and they work well to support young people to practice the skills they need for independent adult life. One child said that the home is good at organising children's days and keeping people informed of what they are doing. The building provides good space, a large dining room and lounge, quiet study rooms, and separate TV lounge. The environment has been improved by a rolling programme of redecoration and new furniture; areas such as the telephone area are scheduled for improvement. The manager encourages a sense of ownership by young people and the building and grounds are clean and tidy. Young people have been instrumental in setting up a new games room that is decorated and equipped to their taste, and they personalise their bedrooms and choose colour schemes and furnishings. Young people have also dug a vegetable plot in the garden.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is good.

Children live in a home that is organised around their needs, and prioritises and seeks to improve their life experiences. Leadership and management of the service is clear, effective and child focused.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Policy, procedure and good practice help children to know that their individual needs on the basis of race, ethnicity, disability, sexuality, gender, age and religion are valued and the service is well able to meet their diverse needs in everyday life in the home.

Children have good information about life in the home in a colourful, lively, written guide. They know what to expect, how they will be cared for and who they are likely to share with. Parents and placing authorities also have a highly detailed and informative statement about the operation of the home.

Children are cared for by sensitive staff who act as positive role models. There are enough staff on shift to ensure that children who need individual attention can have it. The manager tries to ensure that consistency is maintained by limiting the use of agency workers. Induction and basic information for temporary or agency staff is improving. Children get the skilled care they need because permanent staff are confident, experienced and very well trained. A high proportion have achieved the National Vocational Qualification at level 3 in working with children and young people. They are supported by good induction procedures, regular

professional supervision, and appraisal to ensure continuing competence. There are clear deputising arrangements and staff in charge have substantial experience. Parents gave extremely positive views of the team that work with the children. One commented, 'The staff are extremely caring, supportive, and empathise with the children.' Another described staff as excellent and dedicated. The welfare of the children in the home is promoted by regular monitoring and quality review by the manager and senior managers within the county council. Children benefit from living in a setting where the feedback on how the home is operating is taken seriously. Records about children reflect their individuality. They are securely stored and children know how to access them.

## What must be done to secure future improvement?

### Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions, which must be taken so that the registered person meets the Care Standards Act 2000, The Childrens Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

Standard	Action	Due date
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### Recommendations

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

- ensure that the child protection procedures developed are consistent with the local interagency procedures, and ensure that they are submitted to the Local Safeguarding Children Board for consideration and comment (NMS 17.4)
- ensure that reference requests clearly state whether there are any concerns regarding applicants' suitability to work with vulnerable children in line with government safer recruitment guidance (NMS 27.8 and 'Safeguarding Children and Safer Recruitment in Education' DCSF)
- record in writing, and regularly review, risk assessments for the home's premises and grounds (NMS 26.2)
- consult with the fire safety authority about an updated fire risk assessment to include clear and specific guidance about reducing risk of fire through safe use of fire doors (NMS 26)
- ensure that key workers provide individual guidance and support in relation to assessed needs and objectives for the placement. For example, make this evident within records of direct work in their case files so they have a permanent record. (NMS 2)