

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Christopher Garrett / Anna Williams
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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 is a home for up to seven young people, aged between five and 17 years. This service is accredited as a registered therapeutic community. Most of the young people have therapeutic input from external therapists and the aim is to achieve permanency within a family setting. The young people usually remain at the home for up-to-two years before they move on.

Overall effectiveness

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

The home has very high aspirations for the young people it cares for. Individual placement and therapeutic plans clearly set out how the young people's emotional, social, health and therapeutic needs are to be met. The young people receive outstanding support from a stable and experienced care team that helps them to make significant progress, which increases their confidence, self-esteem and self-control.

The young people have exceptionally good relationships with the staff and feel that staff take an interest in them and care about what they are doing. Young people are confident about talking to staff and that they are listened to. Appropriate boundaries are maintained and consistent messages are given to the young people.

The young people's views are sought and taken into consideration on how the home is run and on future developments. Young people are able to bring about changes that affect that daily life and future planning. Young people enjoy living at the home and talk positively about their experiences. Young people leaving care are given a realistic practically based experience that helps in the preparation for independent living. Social workers comment extremely positively on the services that are provided and the progress that the young people make.

Further development is recommended in two areas to raise and improve standards of care; all risk assessments are regularly reviewed and written records are kept on the administration of non prescribed medication.

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 there appropriate written records for non prescribed medication administered by the home (NMS.6.14)
- ensure that that all risk assessments are regularly reviewed (NMS.10.8)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people make significant progress in most aspects of their lives. Young people receive highly individualised support which enables them to develop self-confidence, self-esteem and have a better understanding of their abilities. Young people have a good understanding of their personal issues and with excellent support from the staff, are enabled to take positive steps in managing these. All young people are valued and respected as individuals. They are all given the same opportunities regardless of age or ability. Young people appreciate and enjoy their placement in the home. One of young people explained 'the home is helping me in all ways, like school and my life skills and things like that. It's a good place for me to be at the moment'.

The young people have an excellent record of school attendance and make good educational progress. Individualised arrangements ensure that the young people receive education in accordance with their assessed needs. Staff actively promote education as part of preparation for adulthood and provide practical and emotional support to the young people. Staff have an informed understanding of the young people's education and are able to provide consistent and meaningful support. This is achieved through the exchanging of reports, regular day-to-day contact with the school and routine attendance at school meetings and events.

The physical and emotional well-being of the young people is fully promoted. The young people have a good awareness and understanding of the importance of good health and developing and following a healthy life style. The young people are generally very healthy and there is limited use of prescribed medication.

The young people are able to make and maintain relationships with school friends. The young people, where appropriate, visit friends at their houses or alternatively invite them to home. The young people, subject to any agreed restrictions, are encouraged and emotionally and practically supported to maintain contact with their family and significant others. One of the social worker explained that, 'staff willingly facilitate supervised contacts, have a clear understanding of their role at this time and always report on how a contact session has gone'.

Within the home the young people develop a range of life and independence skills that prepares them well for moving on and independence. Young people help with daily chores and routinely cook meals for each other and the adults. Some of the young people get the opportunity to extend, hone and put into practice their skills in the attached independence unit in preparation for moving on to independent living.

Quality of care

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

Young people enjoy excellent constructive relationships with the staff based on mutual trust and respect. Young people develop strong emotional attachments with members of staff and a confidence that they will be helped and supported with any issues or concerns. A young person explained one of the best things about the home is 'having many people love me, instead of just one or two'. A social worker commented 'when I see my young person, she says to me that she is happy and that the staff respond to her well'.

Young people are listened to and are encouraged to express their views and opinions. They are encouraged to make personal choices and there is no assumption that any are incapable of doing this. Young people are routinely consulted and take part in decisions that affect their daily lives. Young people are able to affect changes that impact on individual and group living. For example, young people have been involved in successful negotiations about having more time to themselves, changes to activities, sanctions and obtaining a large trampoline as part of their leisure activities. Group discussions and individual direct work session help the young people to understand why it may not be possible to always act on their wishes. Staff have high aspirations for the young people. Staff act proactively when presented with challenges that may have an impact on a young person's progress or development. For example, the home contributes to the provision of additional resources enabling young people to meet their educational potential. The well-being of the individual young people is at the centre of care practices with the home. A social worker commented 'I am extremely happy with the service provided for the young people. The staff are always professional and they put the young people first.'

The young people have support from a play therapist and routinely attend appointments with their doctor, dentist and optician which ensures attention to any emerging or ongoing health or emotional needs. Individual health and therapeutic plans clearly identify the young people's specific needs. Social workers comment positively on the arrangements for the young people to access health and therapeutic services. A social worker explained, 'the setting meets all the young person's health needs, and I have no concerns in this regard.'

The young people are cared for in line with their individual care and therapeutic plans which clearly identify their individual needs. Care plans are consistently monitored and progress is evaluated recorded and reported to parents, social workers and other significant people on a regular basis. Individual support is provided in accordance to need by key workers and in close liaison with external agencies. All of the young people regularly access therapeutic support. The young people routinely contribute and participate in the annual statutory review of their placement.

Young people are consulted on menus and there is an emphasis on homemade meals. One of the young people explained, 'staff have talked to us about healthy eating and I know how important it is to eat healthily.' The young people understand why there is limit on the amount of sweets and carbonated drinks available in the house. Young people learn about and experience food from different cultures. The young people lead an active life style including open access to a trampoline, walking,

swimming and gymnastics. The young people are generally very healthy and there is limited use of prescribed medication. However, young people's medical welfare is not fully safeguarded by the home's procedures for administering non-prescribed medication. Appropriate records are not kept and consequently staff are unable to accurately check on when a young person has been given any non-prescribed medication. The impact on the young people is reduced as there is limited use of non-prescribed medication within the home. In the case of a medical emergency the young people have access to suitably qualified first aider at all times.

The home provides a safe, pleasant and healthy environment which young people enjoy living in. The property blends in with neighbouring properties and resembles a family home. The cottage-style accommodation is well maintained and furnished with domestic-style furniture. The accommodation is well resourced and provides good spaces for group and individual activities. The young people have their own bedrooms and these reflect individual personalities and interests. For example bedrooms are personalised using posters, pictures, crafts and belongings. Young people spend time together in a TV lounge or on their own in the quiet room or their bedrooms. A separate part of the building is used as an independence unit and for preparing young people for leaving care. The building provides a good space and is well resourced for the young people to practice their independence while being supported and supervised by staff if required. Young people comment positively on their independence programme. A young person explained how she feels more confident and prepared for the planned move into her own flat.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Staff take positive steps to ensure that the young people live in a safe, secure and caring environment. Young people feel safe in the home and particularly make reference to the availability and access to adults at all times. Young people have confidence in adults being able to help them. The staff openly and routinely discuss potential and actual risks and dangers with the young people to help them understand what they need to do to keep themselves safe. All significant incidents are discussed with the young people and strategies are devised to help prevent reoccurrence. There has been only one recent brief incident when a young person has been reported as missing from care. Young people generally listen to advice that they are given. One young person explained, 'the staff keep us safe, they talk to you about dangers and stop you from hurting yourself'. The young people understand that the rules in the home are devised to help keep them safe but do not like all of them.

Young people are protected from bullying. They said bullying is not an issue in the home and that staff take immediate steps if there is an indication that bullying is taking place. Young people comment positively on the help and support provided by the staff if they experience bullying at school. The home works cooperatively with the school and reports and follows up incidents that are reported by the young people.

The welfare of the young people is fully promoted and the young people are protected from abuse. Care staff are fully aware of the home's child protection procedures and have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities in responding to an allegation or suspicion of abuse. The company's recruitment and vetting procedure is robust and consistently applied ensuring that the young people are not cared for by adults who may cause them harm.

Positive and proactive behaviour management strategies are consistently applied and these have a significant impact on the young people's behaviour. The young people are encouraged to reflect on their behaviour to consider how it impacts on others and what strategies may be used to prevent a reoccurrence. There is minimal use of measures of control. Sanctions are not frequently used, those applied are fair, proportionate and discussed with the young people. Staff receive regular training on positive handling techniques and use these effectively to de-escalate, divert and manage the young people's challenging behaviour. Comprehensive individual behaviour plans ensure that there is a consistent management of behaviour within the home. Young people are provided with therapeutic support which helps them to develop an understanding of their behaviour and learn how to manage it. Social workers commented positively on the home's management of behaviour. A social worker said 'the home has supported the young person to learn relaxation techniques, and also to manage...anger, and this has had a positive effect on the young person'. A young person explained, 'I have been restrained in the past but not recently because I am able to manage my behaviour better'.

Positive steps are taken to ensure that young people are generally safe from fire and other hazards. Comprehensive risk assessments identify risks associated with premises environment and activities. However the senior management team have

failed to ensure that all risk assessments have been reviewed within the given time scales. Therefore staff do not know whether the level of risk remains the same or requires updating. The impact on young people is reduced as recently introduced activities have been appropriately assessed and activities are supervised by staff.

Leadership and management

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

The provider meets the aims and objectives that are set out in the Statement of Purpose. Young people receive information on the home in a colourful and accessible format which allows them to have an understanding of what care is provided by the home.

Young people are provided with consistent and good standards of care from a stable, competent and well-trained staff team. Sufficient staff ensure that both group and individual needs are met. The young people receive care from a well-supported care team who provide good role models to the young people. Staff undertake regulatory and service specific training which provides them with skills, knowledge and competencies required to meet the needs of the young people. The organisation demonstrates a commitment to qualifications and training. Staff receive regular supervision enabling them to reflect on their practice and relationships with the young people.

The young people live in a home that is effectively managed. The Registered Manager and senior staff team provide effective leadership and management of the home. There are established internal and external systems to monitor the quality of care and to ensure compliance with regulations and national minimum standards. Reports identify good practices and any areas for improvement. The views of young people, parents, social workers and significant others are routinely sought on the services that are provided. This has led to changes requested by the young people including a reduction in the use of agency staff.

The manager has a good understanding of the home's strengths and weaknesses. These are addressed through an annual development plan. The organisation and the Registered Manager are committed to continuous improvement in the management and delivery of service. Almost all of the objectives within the current development plan have been met. Recommendations made at a previous inspection relating to recording the young people's consultation on measures of control and ensuring that the home has precise details of an applicant's employment history have been acted upon.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.