

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Susan Mullin
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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 for three young people of either sex between the ages of 10 and 17 years with emotional and behavioural difficulties. It provides medium- to long-term residential care and is owned by a private company. The home is located in a residential area that has easy access to local facilities and public transport. The house consists of a lounge, small lounge, large kitchen-diner and bathroom on the ground floor. There are three young people's bedrooms, a bathroom and staff office on the first floor. There is parking to the front and a garden to rear of the house.

Overall effectiveness

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

Young people make good progress in relation to their starting points and thrive in a nurturing, supportive environment with consistent boundaries. Staff present as very motivated and competent and are dedicated to providing high standards of care, in a safe and stimulating environment for young people.

Young people commented positively about staying at this home and in particular the supportive and friendly approach from the staff team. Young people's individual needs are well met and in line with the ethos of the home, where they are actively encouraged, to improve their skills and abilities through extending their knowledge and understanding.

Leadership and management of the home promote a culture of high aspirations that positively impact on the young people. Monitoring of the service is of a good standard and contributes towards improving practice. The registered manager understands the strengths and areas of further development for the home.

Outcomes for children and young people

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

The home provides young people with positive opportunities to develop and reach their potential. Staff guide and encourage young people in education with good results. Good links between colleges, schools and the staff, support young people in maintaining their education. Staff and young people attend education meetings to review and discuss progress. There is a sense of pride from young people in achieving their educational goals. Preparation for young people to move into adulthood and be independent is an integral part of placements. Young people are supported to gain skills in, for example, cooking, shopping and budgeting. One young person stated that he had a bank account and was being taught to cook simple dishes by the staff.

Staff are aware of young people's strengths and help to nurture their talents and interests. Young people make constructive use of their leisure time. They enjoy participating in activities within their community and further afield. One young person stated 'I enjoy swimming, football, going to the cinema and getting take away food, from a favourite restaurant'. There is a good approach to promoting the physical and emotional well-being of young people. Young people regularly visit the doctor, dentist and optician. Their health plans clearly identify their specific needs.

Young people can contact their family and friends in line with their placement plan. Staff support young people to maintain positive and healthy relationships with family members where appropriate. Young people feel that contact arrangements are made with their best interests in mind and fully contribute to the decisions in this regard. The home is suitable for young people to meet with their family privately.

When asked what was the best thing about the home a young person stated 'the food - they are good cooks here and I get vegetables, salad and fruit all the time'. When asked what was the worst thing about the home the young person stated 'nothing - I would like to be able to use the internet here but they are having it put in very soon'. Another young person did not engage with the inspector for long but stated 'there is nothing wrong with this home- I am fine'.

Quality of care

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

Young people benefit from a competent staff team who are able to meet their needs and support them throughout their placement. Relationships between staff and young people are friendly, positive and good natured. Key staff demonstrate enthusiasm and motivation in the continued welfare and progress of individuals. Young people say that their key worker helps them with their daily routines and celebrate memorable events. Young people are always treated respectfully by the staff who encourage young people to respect each other and their belongings. One young person stated 'I like my key-worker he is good, we get on well together, he listens to me'.

A visiting social worker spoke to the inspector and stated 'the staff keep me informed of every little thing that affects the young person placed here. I get an update in writing every week and I am very happy with the standards of care practised in this home'.

Young people thrive within a nurturing and supportive environment. Young people's care plans clearly identify their individual needs. Consistent monitoring enables staff to evaluate young people's progress on a regular basis. This process positively contributes to statutory reviews. Young people's files provide a good record of their daily progress and all entries are legible, signed and dated. Staff empower young people through their open and transparent ways of working. Young people regularly have the opportunity to comment on the information written about them and staff routinely consult with young people. There is a culture of promoting young people's rights. Young people regularly influence decisions relating to their daily lives, such as, goal setting, the reward system and activity planning. Meetings are held regularly, which enables the young people to express their views, wishes and feelings. Staff take time to help young people to understand why it may not be possible to act upon their wishes in all cases.

Young people are provided with information of how to make a complaint and staff regularly provide opportunities to young people to raise issues or concerns. No young people have made complaints since the last inspection. There are clear records of any complaints, written responses are made with clear information of the outcome and any action taken. One young person who has lived in the home for over a year stated 'I have never made a complaint, I have never needed to'.

Young people are encouraged to make healthy lifestyle choices, such as nutritious meals and healthy exercise. Young people are learning to understand the nutritional value of eating a good diet. Although, young people decide their own menus, there is a move away from eating fast food to enjoying home-made meals. Young people also have an appreciation of different cultures and a range of international cuisine. Young people are provided with access to a wide range of purposeful and enjoyable activities. Staff consult young people about how they wish to spend their time, which include outings and daytrips to local amenities.

The home ensure young people are able to access the services and support they need to meet their physical, emotional and psychological health needs. Young people's placement plan's provide a suitable level of detail to inform staff practice, so

that the young person's needs are well met. Plans include the culture, race, religion and gender of young people. This means that the individuality of young people is fully acknowledged. Review of the arrangements for placements, take place within timescales and include the wishes and feelings of young people.

The home has appropriate arrangements in place for the safe storage and administration of medication, which means that young people receive their medication in line with their prescription. Staff are trained in the safe administration of medication and first aid.

Young people live in a quiet residential area. The children's home is a semi-detached property with a small patio garden area at the rear of the house and a driveway to the front, for parking two vehicles off road. The property blends into the neighbourhood and resembles any family home. Young people have their own bedroom, which they are able to personalise. Young people have their own key to open their bedroom door and access to a lockable box in their rooms, for the safekeeping of personal possessions. The home is well maintained with suitable furnishings. The location enables easy access to a range of community facilities and resources for health, education, recreation and leisure. The home provides a homely and safe environment for young people.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people say they feel safe living at this home and one commented 'staff lock the front door at night to keep people from getting in the home, that makes me feel safer'. There are good levels of staffing to provide sufficient supervision of young people to safeguard their health and welfare. Young people are confident they can approach staff with any concerns and these will be taken seriously. Staff actively discourage bullying and are clear about the potential harmful impact such behaviour has on young people. Information is available to young people who further state that presently there are no concerns about bullying. Therefore, young people are protected from bullying and have the support of staff if they have concerns. One young person stated 'I am not being bullied, I would know what to do if I was, I am happy living here'.

Staff receive safeguarding training and are aware of reporting procedures in the event of a child protection incident or disclosure. Placement plans include an assessment of risk of actual or potential areas of concern and are regularly reviewed senior staff. There are systems and processes in place to facilitate effective communication between parents, where appropriate, schools, health services and the social workers where there have been any significant changes, events or concerns. There are no recorded incidences of young people going missing from the home. The staff are aware of procedures to follow should an incident occur. Staff would always immediately search the area and alert appropriate persons and agencies to secure the safety of the young person.

Management and staff promote positive management of behaviour. Priority is given to the application positive reinforcements and rewards rather than extensive use of sanctions. One young person said 'I am still paying for breaking a window in the home but I think the sanctions are fair really'. High levels of staff support and supervision of young people enable effective use of distraction, de-escalation and calming strategies that significantly reduce the need to use physical intervention. Staff are trained in restraint techniques; however there have no incidents of restraints since the last inspection.

The home has an effective system for the vetting and supervision of visitors. The management have established a thorough comprehensive system for the recruitment of suitable staff to work with young people; however there have been no new staff employed in the home for some considerable time.

The environment is physically safe as health and safety maintenance and checks on appliances, are all up to date. Portable electrical appliances are checked for safety. Staff, young people and visitors are all aware of the fire safety procedures.

Leadership and management

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

Young people live in a home which has good management arrangements. Young people have a particularly strong, trusting relationship with the manager. The management structure is strengthened by an assistant manager, which provides clear accountability and leadership, in the registered manager's absence.

The Statement of Purpose and the young person's guide accurately reflects the services available and the provider meets the aims and objectives set out in this document.

Senior management complete regular monthly unannounced monitoring visits and reports of the home. These provide quality assurance monitoring of the service provision, including talking with staff and young people and observation of care practice in the home. In addition, the registered manager completes monthly monitoring of systems and processes, which informs the quality assurance systems and appropriate action is taken in respect of any shortfalls identified.

The young people benefit from the individual care provided by a sufficient number of permanent staff. Staffing arrangements are well planned to ensure there is an adequate number of staff on each shift to provide consistency of care for young people. The organisation demonstrates a commitment to national vocational qualification training. Staff also undertake training on a variety of topics, which ensures staff have the required individual skills and are up to date with professional and legal developments. Two members of staff spoke to the inspector and stated 'the best thing about the home is the working environment and it is a great team to work with'. Another stated 'the best thing about the home is we have very good team morale here and that the young people appear happy at the moment. Happy children equals a happy home'. When asked if there were any negative aspects, both members of staff stated 'nothing'. 'There is not one thing I can think of- I really enjoy coming to work'.

There is good support for staff within this home. Staff are positive about the management arrangements and feel they are given scope to care for and nurture young people. Formal regular supervisions provide opportunities to discuss professional development, plan actions to meet the needs of the young people and discuss any personal issues that may impact on performance. A record of every supervision is kept on file and is made available to the staff member. This means that professional development can be reviewed during the annual appraisal. A member of staff said regarding the setting 'the management team are always available and approachable. I feel very supported and I feel valued'.

Young people's records are well structured and are held secure and confidential. They cover all matters required in the regulations. There has been one notification sent to Ofsted since the last inspection. Young people make good progress because of the effective management systems that are in place.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.