

## Inspection report for children's home

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<b>Inspector</b>	Maire Atherton
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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 local authority children's home providing planned longer term placements (a minimum of six months) for up to six young people aged between 10 and 17 years of age, who may have a range of emotional and behavioural difficulties.

The detached house is in a residential neighbourhood, within walking distance of the town and with access to public transport. There is a range of community facilities for education and leisure also within easy reach.

### Overall effectiveness

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

Young people grow and develop in a warm environment tailored to meet their individual needs. They are kept safe and are very well supported by a committed and consistent staff team who build strong relationships with the young people and focus on their individual needs at all times.

Excellent support is provided for the meeting of health care and developmental needs. Education is valued and achievements are very well supported and celebrated. Young people are positively encouraged to make their views known about their care plans and their experience of life in the home. Young people benefit from support structured to make contact between young people and their families an enjoyable and meaningful experience.

The home has an experienced and stable staff team which is very well managed, trained and supported so that they are able to provide very consistent care for young people. Excellent systems are in place to monitor the quality of care in the home and the staff are always keen to examine and improve practice.

The inspection has identified two minor areas for improvement, neither of which significantly impact on outcomes for young people.

### Areas for improvement

#### Statutory Requirements

This section sets out the actions which must be taken so that the registered person/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

<b>Reg.</b>	<b>Requirement</b>	<b>Due date</b>
30 (2001)	ensure that notifications are made in accordance with Schedule 5. (Regulation 30)	31/07/2011

## Recommendations

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

- review the use of the monitor in the home and develop a policy in the light of this review. (NMS 10.5)

## Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people benefit from and enjoy highly individualised care that enables each to develop at their own pace. The relationships between young people and the staff team are excellent and provide young people with a secure platform on which to build the skills they need in day-to-day life, providing a framework for their future.

Young people's physical and mental health is effectively promoted through attendance at routine and as required health care appointments. Meal times are social occasions, providing young people with opportunities to discuss wide ranging issues, from the news headlines to household chores. Young people enjoy food that is freshly prepared, nutritious and meets a range of dietary requirements. They also have opportunities to participate in the planning, shopping and preparation. One young person said she was looking forward to learning how to cook sweet and sour chicken without using a shop bought sauce.

All the young people are in education and say that staff are really good at helping them when they have difficulties, talking to people at school and thinking of different ways of doing things, for example. A social worker commented 'the staff have high aspirations for young people and encourage them to have these for themselves'. Achievements are recognised and celebrated enthusiastically.

Young people benefit from positive contact with family and friends, which staff support and manage creatively and sensitively with full consideration of the wishes and feelings of the young people. All young people enjoy activities in the community that reflect their individual interests and abilities. These include music lessons, ballet, gym, kick boxing and dance. Where two young people want to do the same activity they go at different times or to different venues.

Young people develop age appropriate self care and practical independent living skills, achieved by the excellent support and the clear routines and expectations that are in place. Where moving on takes place in a planned way young people achieve very successful transitions to independence. They build on the social networks they have been supported to establish while at the home and maintain education. Even when young people choose to leave in an unplanned way they maintain contact with the home and use the support of staff to move forward.

## Quality of care

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

A real strength of the home is the relationships that exist between the young people and the staff. Staff are highly skilled at establishing and maintaining excellent bonds with each young person on an individual basis.

Young people seek and receive from staff appropriate physical warmth, comfort and reassurance within safe parameters. These relationships form the basis of behaviour management in the home, with a clear emphasis on promoting positive behaviour. Staff know the young people very well and are adept at identifying potential areas of conflict, leading to swift interventions to de-escalate and defuse tensions. This enables young people to learn how to manage this for themselves, for example, getting together to talk about their differences and understand each other's point of view, with staff on hand to provide support if required.

Each young person has the opportunity for one-to-one time before bed on a daily basis with the member of staff of their choice. This time, led by the young people, may be used for a social chat, to discuss heartfelt issues or a bed time story. Young people say they have lots of opportunities to influence what happens in the home both on an individual basis and as a group in house meetings. They say they have a voice in the home, young people are involved in the recruitment of independent visitors for example, and that staff are good at explaining when what they want can not happen.

Each young person has an individual placement plan that is updated on a monthly basis. Young people are fully involved in the process, alongside their key workers, and sign to say they agree with the plan. The plans identify areas of work, for example, any issues relating to identity, education and healthcare needs, and outline how these are to be addressed. A social worker commented 'they go to great lengths to make sure the young person is happy and has what is needed. The key worker has excellent links with school and attends meetings, at short notice too'. Young people's health care needs are very well met with both routine and specialist appointments attended as required with clear information recorded and shared appropriately. Each young person has written consent forms in place so that members of staff may administer medication or first aid where this is necessary, consequently meeting the sole recommendation from the last inspection.

The house is in a residential neighbourhood and indistinguishable from its neighbours, it is very well maintained and provides young people with a warm, comfortable and nurturing environment. There are a range of in-house activities available and sufficient communal space for several to take place at the same time. Staff routinely use a monitoring device on the landing at night. The young people know it is there and sometimes use it to call down for a drink. There is not a policy in place in respect of the use of this monitor.

### **Safeguarding children and young people**

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

Young people say that they feel safe in the home and that staff are really good at helping them think about how they can do things in a way that keeps them safe. For some young people this is underpinned by access to 'R U Safe' external training that encourages them to consider how to promote their own safety. They are also developing an understanding of what to do on any occasion that they feel unsafe, such as ringing staff for advice and guidance when out and about. Young people say that sometimes they think that the staff are over protective. They then say how much they appreciate the boundaries in place and that staff explain why the boundaries are there and although they do not always agree with staff they can see their point of view. This means that young people rarely go missing and when they do appropriate action is taken, including a positive response on return.

The strengths of the relationships between young people and staff provide an effective basis for positive behaviour management. A social worker said 'The young person has a very positive relationship with the key worker and really cares what she thinks, which has a positive effect on the young person's behaviour'. Sanctions are used infrequently and young people report that these are fair and fit the reason for the sanction. Staff are trained in a accredited behaviour management technique, which includes physical intervention. There have been no restraints since the last inspection.

The local authority safeguarding advisor provides annual refresher training for the staff team. This ensures that young people are cared for by staff who know what to do should they have safeguarding concerns in relation to young people and how to respond appropriately to any allegation made by a young person.

Young people benefit from an extremely stable staff team. There have been no new appointments since the last inspection. Visitors to the home are asked to identify themselves on arrival, providing proof of identity where necessary, and to sign the visitors book.

There are robust health and safety systems in place; including updated risk assessments, regular equipment checks and servicing and a prompt response to repairs, which ensure that young people are provided with safe, comfortable and well maintained accommodation.

## **Leadership and management**

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



The skilled and experienced staff team is lead by a committed and effective manager. There are strong systems in place to monitor practice and recording. The manager works regularly on shift giving her a picture of the care provided and the practice of the staff team. The monitoring required by the regulations and the report of the monthly external visits by the local representatives is exceptionally thorough, providing opportunities to develop and improve practice. A notification to Ofsted was not made in respect of the sole notifiable event since the last inspection.

The Statement of Purpose is up to date and accurately reflects the service provided. A social worker commented 'the home are very selective in the admissions, to ensure that they are well placed to meet the needs of children admitted to the home'.

The staff work as a cohesive team and are very consistent in their approach to caring for young people, providing a secure basis for individual growth and development. Staff communication, for example, in records, handovers and staff meetings, maintains a focus on the young people. Staff are very well supported by regular training and formal supervision and the management team provide informal support as needed.

Records are clear, detailed and securely stored. Social workers are very complimentary about the quality of communication they receive from the home, both written and oral.

Equality and diversity practice is **outstanding**.