

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Joanna Heller
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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 privately run home accommodates six young people of either sex aged between 12 years and 18 years old. The home offers 24-hour care for young people with emotional or behavioural difficulties and/or learning disabilities on the autistic spectrum.

Overall effectiveness

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

This is a well resourced and very well managed home where very little placement breakdown is experienced. Staff are competent, caring and well trained. Young people and their social workers highlight strong individual growth and progress during young people's time at the home. Young people comment that their life has been able to be changed by staff showing them a different path. Young people enjoy living at the home and spending time with staff. The relationships built between staff and young people make young people feel safe and well cared for. These relationships underpin the home's success in nurturing young people. One young person summed up their feeling of the home by saying: 'It was outstanding before and it just keeps getting better.'

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.

Reg.	Requirement	Due date
30 (2001)	ensure that any significant event listed in schedule 5 is notified to Ofsted without delay (regulation 30)	29/10/2011

Outcomes for children and young people

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

The home is welcoming and provides young people with a stable, secure and nurturing environment. Young people and their placing authorities grade the home as outstanding. It is clear that young people's experiences of the home are highly positive and that they experience significant personal growth. Young people enjoy the time they spend with caring staff who provide strong positive role models. Young

people receive highly individualised care and support centred on their thoughts, wishes and feelings. Young people are encouraged to celebrate their cultural and spiritual heritage, establishing a clear identity as a young person growing up in Britain today.

All of the young people are healthy and are provided with the support to develop good emotional resilience and increase their maturity and coping mechanisms. This is demonstrated through young people, sometimes for the first time, being able to talk openly to staff about their past and the impact it has had. Young people talk about how they have grown and been supported in changing their life, for example, by turning their back on gang membership and drug use. They comment: 'Staff have shown me another way and I want to live a more positive life' and 'They do lots of things for me, they give me lots of praise and are always cheering me on with lots of well done's.'

Family members are made welcome and young people are able to have supervised contact in the home in certain circumstances. All of the young people are engaging in some form of education or employment. Staff are proactive in discussing with young people their options and developing innovative strategies to motivate young people to engage in some form of education. For example, staff have liaised with a local college to develop an education plan based around a construction course with supported maths and English. Young people arriving at the home with little interest in education and poor attendance have made significant progress. Some young people achieve 98% attendance at school. Young people enjoy weekly one to one activities of their choice with their keyworkers in addition to the planned group activities. Young people also enjoyed two annual holidays in the past year.

Staff support young people to develop self care skills from the point they move in, such as getting involved in cooking, as well as managing their own laundry. Young people are able to identify their personal emotional growth and what this individually means for them. As young people get older, more formal support is offered through the home's independence programme, which is tailored to link with their pathway plan. Young people who have moved on to independent living are engaged in education. They comment positively on the support they received and continue to receive, from staff.

Quality of care

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

Staff and management display an outstanding commitment to ensuring young people have the best life outcomes possible. Young people have each experienced significant personal growth since coming to the home. This is individually demonstrated through areas such as the reduction in absconding patterns, drug usage, gang membership commitment to education and the building of confidence and self esteem. Young people and staff enjoy positive relationships with each other. Young people refer to staff who are caring and whom they enjoy spending time with. Key workers are viewed by young people as strong role models and important people

in their lives.

Staff ensure clear, consistent boundaries are in place. Staff seek to talk through issues with young people to understand why they act as they do. Staff then work with young people to help them through these issues and seek to equip them with the anger management skills they need. Young people are helped to develop maturity and learn appropriate ways to express themselves rather than resorting to negative behaviour. Systems are in place to reward achievements and positive behaviour. For example, one young person has saved up their reward money to buy them self a flat screen TV.

Young people say they feel respected by staff and indicate that they behave well as they want staff to be proud of them. This establishes a home which young people refer to as a quiet and calm place. Young people refer to staff as being people who make young people feel as if they really do care for them and that staff work at the home because they want to be with the them. Young people say that staff are always available and happy to help them through crisis. Young people are fully aware of their care plans, which, are sufficiently detailed to guide staff effectively in the day-to-day support needs of the young people. Staff ensure that young people are educated about and supported to celebrate their faith and heritage as they wish. Staff are sensitive to internal conflict which young people sometimes experience in balancing the expectations of cultural heritage with being a young person growing up in Britain today. Young people are encouraged to discuss their feelings and issues regarding their individual needs and aspirations in a sensitive manner ensuring that their individual needs are met. Staff consult young people on all aspects of their lives and ensure that the care and support provided is highly child focused.

Education is positively promoted and young people are rewarded for regular attendance and commitment. Staff have established relationships with young people's schools, colleges and the virtual head teacher. Staff are aware of the educational abilities and goals of each of the young people. Staff are proactive at advocating for young people where it is felt that educational arrangements are not appropriate and are imaginative when seeking alternative educational opportunities. Staff talk to young people about their aspirations and academic strengths, ensuring education is viewed as a way to improve their life chances. Relevant employment and apprenticeship opportunities are actively sought to ensure young people have the best opportunities of entering the world of employment. Young people continue with these placements once they have left the home.

Staff ensure that young people know how to complain and have confidence in the home to effectively respond to any issues they raise. Staff swiftly address any issues of conflict within the home. Issues of conflict and diversity within the group are discussed on a one to one basis as well as being brought to house meetings. Young people emphasise that living at the home is like living in family style setting where they are able to raise issues which are worrying them immediately.

All of the young people are healthy. Staff ensure that they are nurtured to develop good emotional resilience and increase their maturity and coping mechanisms.

Children and young people enjoy healthy lifestyles and are supported to access medical professionals such as doctors, dentists and opticians as appropriate. The home privately engages counselling services to help young people. The organisation is moving towards being accredited as a therapeutic setting. Staff discuss with young people the importance of healthy eating and fresh fruit and healthy snacks are actively encouraged. Discussions also take place with young people about issues such as giving up smoking and the use of drugs. Staff remind young people about not spending too much time on the games consoles in case of muscle problems and highlight the need to get exercise. Staff are well trained and competent, having received training in key areas such as first aid, food handling, emotional well-being and other issues which affect young people.

The building provides young people with welcoming homely accommodation that meets their needs. Each young person has their own personalised bedroom which they are able to lock and keep private. Young people are given a budget to personalise their rooms. Staff are provided with suitable sleep in accommodation. The home is suitably well maintained and decorated. The provider has plans to convert the loft into additional space for both staff and young people enhancing the accommodation available. External and internal décor is to be upgraded upon completion of these building works.

Young people, ex-residents and placing authorities comment on the competence, friendliness, professionalism and caring nature of staff. Young people grade the home as 'brilliant' and comment that staff have made a real positive difference in their lives.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people feel safe, secure and well cared for. Young people refer to a calm environment where issues of conflict are dealt with immediately and effectively, ensuring young people feel safe and supported. Bullying is not an issue of concern and young people are confident that staff will address any issues swiftly to ensure they remain safe.

Placing authorities comment positively on the ability of staff to effectively introduce structure and boundaries for young people who have not experienced these before. Staff ensure that young people know the behavioural expectations and rules, and enforce these rules fairly. Young people comment that the rules are fair, but, emphasise they feel closer to expected standards of behaviour rather than rules as such. Positive behaviour reward systems are in place which formally recognise young people's individual targets and achievements each week. These targets are broadly set around education, self care and behaviour. Young people are able to save their rewards up for significant items, for example, one young person was able to earn a new television for their bedroom. Systems for managing negative behaviour are applied consistently and remain child focused. Young people refer to a strength of

the home as staff enabling them to become more aware of themselves and the impact their behaviour has on others. Young people feel that one of the strengths of the home is how staff enable young people to talk about their problems and look at managing their own behaviour and control their anger. All staff are trained in control and restraint and de-escalation techniques, however, restraint is used very rarely. Staff are competent in managing difficult situations and minimise the involvement of police to prevent the criminalisation of behaviour. Sanctions applied are appropriate and relevant to the negative behaviour displayed. The consistent and robust approach to managing behaviour, as well as high expectations, ensures that young people learn to accept appropriate boundaries. Young people learn why it is not possible to always have what they want, when they want. The therapeutic approach to behaviour management ensures that young people feel that staff are 'there for them'.

Comprehensive risk assessments are in place for young people, which identify their vulnerability and any risks they may pose to others. Activity based risk assessments are also in place. It is now unusual for a young person to go missing as they feel happy, safe and secure at the home. However, in the rare instances that they do go, staff ensure their safety, and notify them as missing to the appropriate agencies in line with local guidelines having first tried all avenues to locate them. This is a significant area of growth for some young people who were on admission regularly missing from their family home or care setting.

Young people are safeguarded from unsuitable people gaining employment in the home through robust vetting practices. Management ensure no member of staff is employed at the home unless checks have been undertaken to ensure their suitability to work with vulnerable young people. Checks on the continuing suitability of staff are undertaken periodically.

Any issues of a child protection nature are managed appropriately ensuring the safety of the child, remains paramount. Staff are aware of what to do should an issue of a child protection nature arise having received regular training on safeguarding young people.

Management ensure good systems are in place to ensure the safety and security of the building. Regular checks are undertaken to ensure the ongoing safety of the building. Hazardous chemicals and sharp knives are stored securely. Fire precautionary arrangements in the home ensure young people and staff are safeguarded from fire in line with current good practice.

Leadership and management

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

This is a well resourced and managed home. Management and staff consistently demonstrate high expectations of, and aspirations for, the young people in their care. Little changeover occurs in the staff team, most of whom have worked at the home for several years, ensuring continuity for young people.

The manager and owner lead by example and have high expectations of staff as well as young people. Management reinforce the good parenting role expected of staff decisions are based on the principle of 'if this was your child what would you do?' Staff consistently demonstrate reflective practice, always trying to understand what worked or did not work in a particular situation and why. Staff work solidly together as a team to ensure good outcomes for young people. The management team as a whole are approachable, flexible and supportive. Regular staff meetings and supervision ensure that staff are aware of key issues within the home. Management team meeting review any new legislation and changes in best practice ensuring they remain at the forefront of good child care.

The organisation demonstrates an excellent commitment to staff training. Core training such as child protection, first aid, food hygiene, medication, behaviour management, restraint and health and safety, is provided to all staff and updated appropriately. Staff also undertake a comprehensive variety of relevant training in areas, such as, Sexual Health, Self Harm, Autism, Learning Disability Awareness, Cultural Awareness, Key Working, and Care Planning & Risk Assessments, equality and diversity and Every Child Matters. All staff are undertaking or have completed training in working with children and young people to diploma level. Staff are also planning to undertake formal training in the therapeutic approach. This is to support one of the management team's aims to be a recognised therapeutic setting.

Management ensure information about the home is made available to young people in formats which they can easily understand. The welcome pack provided to all young people includes a copy of the young people's guide. Management ensure that complaints are effectively responded to, investigated and managed. Young people know how to complain and have confidence in management to respond to any issues of concern which they may raise.

The home is well staffed enabling staff to provide highly individualised and child focused care. Staff are competent at the role they perform and establish genuine and positive relationships with young people, parents and other agencies. Young people benefit from strong role models of both sexes and from a wide variety of backgrounds.

The organisation has effective systems in place for monitoring the standards of care within the home. These include good quality assurance feedback systems with an excellent response rate. Any issues identified are swiftly addressed and staff, under the guidance of the manager, are continually striving to improve. Management failed to notify Ofsted of one significant event. However, all other appropriate agencies were informed ensuring the young people continued to be safeguarded.

Feedback from young people and placing authorities is highly complementary regarding the competence, interpersonal skills, and commitment of staff. Professionals refer to their experiences of working with the home as excellent, highlighting the ability of staff to work well in partnership with young people and their families as well as placing authorities in order to achieve the best possible

outcomes for young people Young people refer to staff as being caring people who always act as good role models. Young people summed up their thoughts of the home; in the following comments, 'I'm very happy I live here, I want to stay until I'm 18'. 'If I was manager I wouldn't change anything. It was outstanding before and it just keeps getting better.'

This very well managed and resourced home with a team of staff who consistently demonstrate that they place the young people at the centre of everything they do.

Equality and diversity practice is **outstanding**.