

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Martha Nethaway
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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, run by a company, offers placements for up to three young people who may have a combination of mental health, psychological, emotional or complex care needs that present challenging behaviour. The service is designed to offer medium- to long-term care placements but can, on exception, accept emergency placements. The home's programme of care incorporates a structured balance of education, recreation and therapeutic interventions tailored to meet individual needs.

Overall effectiveness

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

The effectiveness with which the home provides personalised and well-planned care is good. The home takes full account of the individual needs of the young person and promoting positive outcomes for all young people.

The quality of the relationships between staff and young people in the home is good. Young people benefit because relationships with staff are stable, positive and supportive. In turn, young people are making good progress at the home because staff encourage young people to maximise their opportunities in relation to their health, education and personal development.

The views of the young people about the quality of care in the home are being regularly sought. This helps to strengthen the voice of the young people living at the home. They know that their views and opinions really count.

Young people are safe and feel safe at the home. The collaboration between social workers, the management team and staff successfully promotes an effective working partnership to meet the needs of young people.

As a result of this visit, one area for improvement has been identified. It relates to implementing a development plan for the home. This is an administrative area for improvement and does not adversely affect the continued good outcomes that young people are achieving.

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 the home has a written development plan. (NMS 15.2)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people enjoy positive and constructive relationships with staff and with each other, and behave appropriately. Staff strive to ensure that young people are safe, happy, healthy and enjoy achieving success in their personal lives and in education. Young people are making good progress and staff are helping young people achieve their priority areas for change, such as not placing themselves at unnecessary risk. For example, young people's behaviour has improved and they are learning to take more personal responsibility.

Young people feel that their views, wishes and feelings are actively sought and that they influence the running of the home. For example, young people meet with their key worker on a weekly basis where progress and concerns are openly discussed. In addition, young people are invited to attend house meetings where the day-to-day running of the home and the active involvement of young people is discussed frankly. Staff also help young people to understand why it may not be possible to act upon their wishes in all cases

Young people are cared for in line with their individual placement plan. The contribution of the home to those plans is of a good quality and involves young people and people who are significant to them. Young people are provided with many opportunities to begin to open up more to staff and talk about their feelings to staff. Some excellent work is taking place around attachment difficulties and young people are provided with opportunities to talk about their feelings. This innovative good practice helps to improve the outcomes for young people. For some young people progress has been evidenced through becoming more self-confident and making friends more easily.

The home provides a healthy environment where young people are able to access the services and support they need to meet their physical, emotional and psychological health needs. Many of the young people are accessing specialist health services through child and adolescent health services. This means that young people have good access to counselling and specialist services so that their emotional well-being is addressed consistently. All young people are registered with a doctor, dentist and optician. This results in young people accessing the correct level of health care in a timely manner. The home also monitors and promotes other health related issues, such as diet and exercise, so that young people's fitness and well-being are being actively addressed as is necessary. As a result, young people care about their presentation and are clean and well dressed.

Staff are proactive and consistent in supporting the educational achievements of young people. Young people's school attendance is broadly good. Where young people are not in education the home has considered the prospect of supporting

young people to access a college placement. This has already begun to take place by attending the college's open day event.

Young people have direct access to a range of purposeful and enjoyable activities. For example, young people are doing activities, such as gym, playing football, cinema, swimming, cooking and reading. This helps to harness young people's motivation, attitude and enthusiasm. It is making a difference because these activities are giving young people broader life choices.

Needs relating to the young person's cultural background and personal identity are identified and positively addressed in both daily living and care planning. The home creates an environment where all young people regardless of their disability, ethnicity, faith, gender, language, religious belief, and sexual orientation are welcomed, supported and provided with high quality care. The home does this because of the way that it relates to diversity in the physical space of the home. This also includes how the policies and procedures that impact on the delivery of care to young people from diverse backgrounds. The staff ensure that they confront bias and instil positive values.

Young people are benefiting from appropriate contact with family, friends and other people who are important to them. Young people benefit from good, regular and consistent contact visits. Young people gain because the staff help to preserve and strengthen the contact which is likely to lead to better outcomes for young people.

As young people progress in their placement at the home they are being well prepared for a good transition to independence and adult life. For example, young people are being encouraged to take part in employment. One young person commented, 'I have recently joined an agency and each morning at half past eight I ring and this is to show the agency that I am serious about finding work.' Young people make gradual progress to learning to develop key independent skills. For example, the home has an annex where young people are provided with a 'live' opportunity to practise some of their key living skills. This includes taking responsibility for cleaning, shopping, laundry, leisure and travel. One young person commented, 'I regularly go and see my friends and use the train to get there.'

Quality of care

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

Young people are developing a positive self-view, emotional resilience and knowledge and understanding of their background and confidence in their skills. Young people are generally well behaved and display a growing level of maturity in their behaviour and willingness to accept help and support. Young people are learning to understand how their behaviour may impact on others and are now learning to accept rules and boundaries. For some young people this is significant because they are no longer involved in criminal or anti-social behaviours. Young

people are confident about talking to staff openly when angry or emotionally unsettled.

Young people understand how to make a complaint because the home's complaints procedures are user-friendly and easy to use. So far, no young people have made a complaint.

Young people's health, including their physical, emotional, and psychological health, is addressed. Young people's health care plans pertinently address sexual health, mental health and well-being. Staff promote young people's right to information, help, support and guidance. This is because there is a good emphasis on improving the health outcomes for young people. Young people are being educated and supported to make better informed health and lifestyle choices. One young person commented, 'I go to the gym and leisure centre about three times a week.' Staff encourage young people to keep fit and well which is viewed as crucial to helping improve young people's health throughout life. Young people are learning how to budget, shop and prepare simple and straightforward meals. This helps to increase their practical skills and self-confidence through taking part and learning about food.

Young people are mostly attending school or about to enrol at college. Young people's educational needs are being met through the company's coordinated educational resources. This includes teachers providing lessons in the home and within the community environment. Staff awareness and understanding is good because of the excellent levels of communication between the teachers and the management team at the home. This is evidenced through the sharing of what works to support young people with complex learning and behavioural needs. Staff regularly support extra-curricular activities, such as cooking using simple calculations for weighing and measuring. As a result, young people are provided with good opportunities to learn through structured activities. Another example is the progress that young people are making with their reading because this is included in the extra-curricular activities timetable. This encourages young people's self-belief and confidence.

Young people are making a positive contribution to their home and the wider community. This is illustrated through the different number of activities that young people are encouraged to do in the home. For example, some young people are managing their own weekly budget. This means that they plan and buy their own food shopping. As a consequence, they have mastered a number of good skills including, hygiene, cooking skills, presentation and gaining knowledge about healthy eating habits. In addition, young people are being encouraged to use the resources local to their environment including the library, leisure centre and public transport.

Care is provided in a large detached house in an urban location. It has the benefit of easy access to a comprehensive range of recreational and leisure amenities in the local town. The house has been modernised and refurbished to offer a spacious living environment with individual rooms for young people. Since the last inspection, some redecoration and painting has taken place. This means young people continue to benefit from a well cared for environment. The home now has an annex flat for

older young people who are working their way towards leaving care. One young person commented, 'I painted the bedsit area and in the future I would like to do work as a painter and decorator.'

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people are safe and feel safe. The quality of the care at the home is good. Young people benefit because staff protect them and provide young people with opportunities to take positive actions in their lives in a safe environment. This is underpinned by good procedures and training related to safeguarding, behaviour management and anti-bullying. This commitment helps the home build on their capacity to keep young people safe.

Young people rarely go missing and if they do, they return quickly. Young people who do go missing are protected as far as possible and responded to positively on their return. This is evidenced from staff and young people because the home shows that these events are infrequent. This is because staff are good at helping to educate young people to learn about the consequences of their own risky behaviours. As a result, young people are being kept safe.

Young people are receiving good quality care that is sensitive to their needs. The home ensures that the safety of young people and staff is given equal importance. For example, young people's positive behaviour is promoted and restraint is rarely used. Staff set the pace and tone for high expectations of behaviour. Young people are learning about developing more self-control. As young people develop more emotional maturity undesirable behaviours have significantly reduced. This is as a result of staff seeking to maintain relationships with young people which are positive and based on mutual respect. As a consequence, young people receive reassurances and know and understand that staff want to see them succeed.

Staff working with young people in the home are carefully selected and vetted. This helps to deter, reject and identify potential staff that may be unsuitable. This is underpinned by the home's detailed recruitment policy, recruitment techniques and procedures. The home is satisfied that the staff employed at the home are suitable to work with vulnerable young people. Young people benefit because the turnover of staff is low and this allows for good continuity of care, support and guidance.

The environment is physically safe, appropriately secure and takes account of the needs and characteristics of the young people. The home is well supported by the management team which includes a highly-structured environment for young people. For example, all young people have a personalised risk assessment which clearly evaluates where extra support, care and guidance is being targeted. Young people are additionally protected because they are provided with opportunities to participate in the fire drills so that they know what to do in the event of an emergency.

Leadership and management

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

The home is effectively and efficiently managed. The management team's commitment is good. This is encapsulated through the complete focus on good quality outcomes for young people. Staff are encouraging, empowering and inclusive in their daily practice with young people. The work taking place at the home is founded on the knowledge about the young person through the assessment, implementation and review of good care plans. The home demonstrates capacity for continuing improvement based on its track record of performance. One social worker commented, 'Staff are extremely attentive and this includes the relationship between the parents and the young person. The staff team manage the young person's welfare well.'

Since its previous inspection the evidence of the impact of improvements includes placement planning meetings and the successful implementation of care plans. Young people are additionally aided from the visits taking place from the independent visitor and advocacy service. As a consequence, this gives young people extra support particularly if they are feeling disempowered, isolated or vulnerable. The staff welcome advocacy because it helps to give young people more choice and control.

The provider meets the aims and objectives in the Statement of Purpose which ensures that young people's immediate needs are met by a professional, caring and specially trained staff. Young people, staff and the placing authority are clear about the aims and objectives of the home and what services and facilities it provides because information is being reviewed at least once a year. All relevant parties are well informed about any changes. The home is adequately resourced, indicating the financial viability of the provider.

The registered person actively and regularly monitors the quality of care provided, including consultation with young people about their welfare. The mechanism used at the home includes house meetings, key worker meetings, reviews and daily contact meetings with staff. As a result, the voice of young people is actively encouraged and the outcomes of these processes mean that young people are engaged with the home and their placement. One young person explained, 'There are a number of staff that I like in the home and especially my key worker who is very good to talk with.'

The management team understand the strengths and weaknesses of the home and have development plans in place. However, the current annual development review is at a strategic operational level and does not relate to the day-to-day operation of the home. This results in staff not being provided with an opportunity to contribute to further development. Similarly, young people are not involved in defining outcomes and setting standards.

The home employs a sufficient number of staff, who are appropriately trained and effectively supervised and supported. Staff are fully supported and guided to fulfil

their roles and provide a good quality service to young people. The home is proactively and positively meeting the needs of young people. This is underpinned by the emphasis placed on improving the outcomes for young people. Staff receive good quality training to enhance their individual skills and to keep them up to date with professional and legal developments. The consequences of this for young people is that staff are professionally equipped and motivated to help make a difference to young people's lives.

Young people's records are clear, up to date and stored securely and successfully contribute to an understanding of the child's life. Young people understand that their rights are being upheld to have active participation in decisions about their care and future plans.

All significant events relating to the protection of young people accommodated in the home are notified by the registered person of the home to the appropriate authorities and appropriate action is taken following the incident. The consequence of this for young people is that it demonstrates the home's commitment to the promotion of young people's welfare at all times.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.