

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Judith Longden / Amanda Ellis
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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 children's home is run by a local authority. It is registered to accommodate up to six young people. The home provides long-term residential care to young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Overall effectiveness

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

Young people are making outstanding progress in all areas, particularly in building confidence, health outcomes, education and skills for independence. Young people benefit from good quality care that is personal and well planned. The staff team are skilled, experienced, competent and motivated. Young people have excellent relationships with staff. Young people say the care they receive is really good, they feel safe and are happy.

One recommendation is restated from the last inspection and four requirements and one recommendation are made as a result of this inspection. There are some shortfalls in recording in relation to missing persons, recruitment procedures, cultural information and supervision records. These do not present a significant impact on young people's safety. There is some inappropriate use of financial sanctions. There was an issue with provision of fire safety equipment but this was rectified during inspection. However, a requirement is made to ensure this is not repeated.

Areas for improvementStatutory 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
17 (2001)	ensure the imposition of a financial penalty is not used as a disciplinary measure in respect of withholding or delaying pocket money (Regulation 17 (2)(g))	04/11/2011
26 (2001)	ensure full and satisfactory information is available to the manager in respect of matters specified in Schedule 2, namely proof that qualifications have been checked (Regulation 26 (3) (d))	04/11/2011
28 (2001)	maintain in respect of each child a record that includes the information specified in Schedule 3 namely cultural, religious and linguistic background (Regulation 28 (1) (a))	04/11/2011

32 (2001)	maintain adequate precautions against the risk of fire, ensuring fire extinguishers are not removed. (Regulation 32 (1) (a))	19/10/2011
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Recommendations

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

- ensure written records when a child goes missing detail the circumstances of the child's return, any reasons given by the child for running away from the home and any action taken in the light of those reasons (NMS 5.10)
- ensure records of supervision detail the time and length of supervision. (NMS 19.5)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people make exceptional progress in achieving positive outcomes in all areas. Progress and achievement is reviewed with young people in key work meetings and shared with the placing authority. As a result, young people develop confidence in their own abilities and improve their self-esteem. Young people are supported to understand their backgrounds and why they are in care. Young people feel able to talk to staff about their feelings and emotions and recognise how this impacts on their behaviour. A culture and environment of respect and individuality nurtures and supports young people to develop self-awareness and emotional resilience. One young person said, 'it is all good here.'

Young people are involved in developing a menu that provides a healthy balanced diet with vegetarian alternatives and also includes their favourite food. They help with the preparation and cooking of meals. This means they benefit from a healthy diet whilst developing skills and confidence.

Young people are helped to understand their health needs and how to maintain a healthy lifestyle. Young people have made excellent progress in improving their health by stopping smoking and drinking alcohol. Young people with a history of self-harm have been helped to understand their behaviour and develop strategies to prevent further harm. Activities and exercise are encouraged in order to promote healthy living. Their health is further promoted by the implementation of daily personal hygiene routines.

Young people make excellent progress in developing their confidence and social skills. This is because staff encourage young people to engage in a variety of activities and try different challenges. Cultural and historical events are held to broaden the experience of young people. Staff are proud of the progress young

people make. They record this in key work sessions and in young people's memory books with photographs of activities and events. This helps young people acknowledge their progress and further develops their confidence.

Young people are attaining outstanding achievements in their education and maintaining excellent attendance since coming to the home. Young people gain qualifications in a variety of subjects and also develop skills through alternative education projects. Young people who have left school are actively applying for jobs or have secured employment. Individual achievement and progress is recorded and monitored and young people are able to review their progress. This develops their confidence and encourages them to continue to achieve their educational potential.

Young people benefit from appropriate contact with their parents, family and friends. The quality of contact has improved since being at the home. Some young people take responsibility for organising their own contact in line with the contact arrangements in their placement plan. Where contact is not appropriate or arrangements are changed this is explained to young people. Staff encourage appropriate friendships and support young people in making arrangements to ensure they are safe.

Young people develop skills to enable them to live independently. They have access to an independence kitchen where they learn to budget, plan menus, shop and cook. They also learn food safety, safe storage of food and nutritional information. Staff help young people to develop skills in household management, bill paying and chores such as laundry. Staff and young people have excellent relationships with the leaving care team and pathway plans are developed with young people. This means young people are prepared and supported for adulthood. One young person said, 'staff have taught me lots and I am ready to move on.'

Quality of care

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

Young people are able to share their views and voice their opinions in all aspects of their care and in the running of the home. They know their feelings and wishes are taken into account. They are also supported to understand that their wishes cannot always be acted upon. Young people contribute to their care plans and reviews with support from staff.

Young people are aware of how to complain and are supported in making their complaint heard. Complaints are promptly addressed demonstrating that young people are listened to and their concerns are taken seriously. This enables young people to gain confidence and skills in communicating their opinions and views.

Young people participate in regular house meetings and also informal mealtime discussions. At these meetings young people help plan menus and discuss activities. They also deal with any issues and concerns they may have. As a result, young people are actively engaged in how the home operates.

Young people benefit from excellent relationships with staff. Young people talk openly with staff who support them to understand their emotions and feelings. This reinforces the positive relationships. A social worker states that relationships are excellent and as a result the placement has 'been a very positive experience'.

Young people benefit from a strong emphasis on meeting their holistic health needs. Very good health plans are developed with professionals and young people and these are constantly reviewed to ensure young people's health needs are met. Young people have access to various medical professionals including a clinical psychologist and drug and alcohol specialists. Staff use inventive and creative ways to support young people who are fearful of medical professionals, using incentives and encouraging informal health visits to the home. Staff are trained in first aid and in the administration of medication. Healthy living, diet and exercise are encouraged. Good monitoring of food consumption ensures young people follow a healthy diet. Support is given to young people to explore health topics, such as sexuality, relationships, smoking and alcohol consumption. As a result, the physical, emotional and psychological health of young people is promoted.

Staff encourage young people to engage in a variety of activities in and outside of the home. Group activities are encouraged as well as those individual to young people's interests. This enables young people to develop a wide range of skills and enhance their confidence. One young person who has completed a court reparation order continues to work voluntarily with the youth offending team in order to continue to develop confidence and skills and contribute to the community.

Young people are able to access a variety of education options and alternative curriculums. This means they are supported to learn in different ways that are appropriate to their needs. Young people are supported in their attendance and attainment by excellent joint work between staff and education providers. Staff attend parent evenings and provide regular updates to the placing authority on young people's progress. As a result, young people are supported to achieve their educational potential.

Young people live in a home that provides a warm and friendly environment. The communal areas are well decorated, furnished and maintained. Young people and staff are decorating and personalising the bedrooms. This enables young people to feel involved in the home and its appearance and, as a result, they respect the home. Young people have space to be on their own as well as using areas where they can socialise. The home is close to local amenities and leisure facilities providing a range of opportunities for young people.

Good placement plans are in place for young people that identify the individual health, education and emotional needs of the young person and how these can best be met. However, the plans do not make reference to cultural, linguistic or religious background to evidence that young people's needs are adequately met. Staff, however, build excellent relationships with young people to identify issues and the relevant support required. Detailed care plans are written with input from young

people. These indicate how each young person is to be cared for, their daily routines, behaviours and how to minimise risks. As a result, the day-to-day care of the young people reflects the individual requirements of their placement plan.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Staff and young people enjoy excellent relationships based on mutual respect. This provides a foundation for the development of positive behaviour. Young people are actively involved in their own behaviour management plans. One young person has a 'how I keep calm' checklist on display in their room to help them manage their behaviour and anger. Staff have been trained in positive behaviour management and appropriate use of restraint and work closely together to consolidate ways of managing behaviour in a positive way. As a result, the use of restraint has reduced significantly. There is inappropriate use of financial sanctions in respect of pocket money being withheld or delayed. However, young people say that sanctions are fair and are encouraged to comment in the sanctions book. The effectiveness of sanctions is monitored by the manager.

The home has a broad range of policies and procedures for safeguarding practices in respect of child protection, handling allegations, young people missing or absent without authority, and countering bullying. Staff are trained in safeguarding. They are clear on their role and responsibilities and competent in implementing procedures in order to safeguard young people. Young people take an active role in their own risk management developing action plans to reduce risk. This protects young people from potential hazards and harm. Young people say they feel safe in and out of the home. One young person said, 'staff help to keep me safe and help me learn how to keep myself safe'.

The home has a good missing from home and absent without authority procedure and protocol. There is good recording of incidents when young people go missing and staff actively look for young people. There is, however, inconsistency in recording details of the return of young people and details of any discussions around why they were absent. This means there is little evidence of the work being undertaken to reduce the likelihood of repeat incidents. There are, however, few incidents of young people missing.

Bullying has been an issue in the past. Dynamics within the home mirror many teenage relationships with conflicts and tensions within group living as well as allegiances and loyalty. Staff have implemented strategies to reduce the likelihood of bullying and help young people to protect themselves within the group. As a result, incidents of bullying have substantially reduced and young people feel safer and happier.

Young people are protected from unsuitable visitors to the home by good monitoring and checking of visitors. The manager and senior staff sit on recruitment panels for new staff. The recruitment process is thorough and the required Criminal Records

Bureau, identity and employment history checks are carried out. The recruitment panel take copies of qualifications and send all the required information to the local authority Human Resources department. However, on inspection the recruitment files from this department do not consistently contain the qualification information. In addition, the home is not provided with full information in respect of the matters specified in Schedule 2 without reference to Human Resources. There is no evidence to suggest this shortfall in practice has impacted on the safety of young people.

Regular fire drills are held and fire alarm systems are checked as required. There is a comprehensive fire risk assessment and health and safety assessment for the building and equipment. Regular maintenance checks are performed. These ensure the building is safe and appropriately secure. Some fire extinguishers had been temporarily removed and stored in the office due to behaviour of two young people. Despite staff knowing where they were stored this could have increased the response time in dealing with any fire issues. This issue was rectified during inspection.

Leadership and management

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

Young people continue to benefit from improvements made by the manager and staff in the quality of service. All previous requirements have been met. The manager has been appointed Registered Manager and has established a robust monitoring system to monitor all care practices. Previous recommendations in respect of countering bullying and recruitment protocols have been met and, as a result, young people are kept safe. A previous recommendation to complete the refurbishment programme has been met. One recommendation has not been met and is restated in respect of recording details of return when young people have been missing.

The home has effective policies and procedures in place for the admission of young people into the home, ensuring young people are made to feel welcome when arriving at the home. A comprehensive assessment takes place including placement meetings with all agencies involved. Any additional staffing needs are identified. Prior to admission the compatibility of needs of the resident group and the individual young person are considered. Young people are encouraged to take an active role in all aspects of their care including plans for moving on. As a result, young people feel involved in their placement and valued.

Staff and young people are clear about the objectives and ethos of the home. Staff provide a good quality service for young people in line with the home's Statement of Purpose. The home provides each young person with a welcome guide which details the service offered. This ensures young people are clear about the care and service provided.

The home is provided and managed by suitable personnel who are qualified and experienced. The staff team have a variety of skills, qualifications and experience and bring different strengths to the service. One staff member said, 'staff have

different skills and that is why it works here'. The staff rota ensures young people's needs are met through the provision of sufficient staffing.

Staff are able to continue to develop their knowledge and skills through a variety of training opportunities to improve their competency and to ensure young people's needs continue to be met.

Staff receive good quality regular supervision and feel supported by the manager. However, the recording of supervision does not indicate the time or length of supervision. Although this does not have an impact on young people, it reduces the level of accountability. Staff meetings are held on a regular basis. As a result, staff feel supported to continue to provide a quality service for young people.

The home has very good procedures for monitoring the quality of the service provided and the welfare of the young people. The registered provider undertakes visits to the home in accordance with regulations and carries out checks to ensure the welfare of young people is monitored. The registered provider consults with young people to identify any areas for development to improve the quality of care provided. The manager monitors records kept by the home to identify any concerns, patterns or trends. Records are stored securely and information sharing is in accordance with data protection. All significant events relating to the protection of young people in the home are notified as appropriate and actions taken as required. As a result, young people are consulted about the quality of care they receive and how effectively their needs are met and their welfare and protection is monitored.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.