

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Graham Robinson
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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 accommodates up to four young people in total, with emotional and behavioural difficulties. It provides crisis intervention placements for up to 28 days and also medium and longer stays. There is an additional two bedroom bungalow on site, which accommodates one young person, who is supported in living more independently.

Overall effectiveness

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

All young people are making good progress in relation to their starting points both socially and educationally. They benefit from a supportive environment that is underpinned by clear and consistent boundaries. Individual needs are identified with plans and strategies put into place to address them. Their progress and development is closely monitored.

Young people are cared for by a staff team, who work positively and energetically to meet their needs in a non-punitive way. Staff demonstrate a good understanding of safe working practices, linked to young people's individual needs. As a result excellent working practices ensure young people's welfare is promoted positively.

The management and organisation of the home is good. The management team is relatively new, but is working effectively to drive the home forward. Improved levels of communication between staff promote consistency of working practices. The strengths and weaknesses of the home are assessed and there are suitable plans for continued development.

Staff and young people enjoy excellent relationships with each other and this enhances the progress being made by young people. Although comprehensive and child focused, the young person's written guide does not contain all the necessary information following the introduction of the revised children's homes standards.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- update and revise the young person's written guide to include the contact details for the Children's Rights Director and a young person's independent reviewing

officer as well as updating the contact details for Ofsted. (NMS 13.5)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people are achieving positive outcomes in all respects. They receive high levels of support that allows them to stabilise their lifestyle and go on to prosper socially and educationally. The ethos and practices of the home are supportive and encourages young people towards setting and achieving personal goals. Young people's individual needs are identified and these are reflected in the plans and strategies in place for them.

Young people benefit from contact with family, friends and other appropriate adults. They feel well supported by staff who encourage and support young people to maintain appropriate contacts. As a result, young people's needs are well met.

The home works proactively with other agencies to promote and support young people's educational arrangements. For example, the strong links developed by the home with local colleges means young people gain access to relevant courses. A high level of input from staff at appropriate times is designed to support young people in their respective educational placements. This level of support, coupled with an expectation from staff that young people will engage positively in their education, gives young people the opportunity to achieve good educational outcomes.

Young people enjoy good health and their health needs are positively promoted. Good health plans ensure individual needs are assessed and met. All young people are registered with community-based health services to access day-to-day health support. The home has fostered excellent links with more specialised services, which are available for young people to access when required. Young people are encouraged to improve their lifestyles through diet and exercise. They are provided with information and given every encouragement and practical support to modify certain aspects of their lifestyle, such as tobacco, drugs and alcohol. As a result, most young people enjoy improvements in their general health and fitness levels.

Young people actively contribute to certain aspects of the home's daily operation. For example, they willingly share shopping and cooking experiences with staff as part of the daily routine. This and more targeted areas of work and development, underpinned by effective planning, promote young people towards taking more responsibility for their own actions and move towards a more independent lifestyle.

The home is well established within the community and actively encourages young people to take full advantage of the resources available. Individual activities as well as those shared with staff and other young people form part of the evening and weekend routines. Photographs displayed around the home give an insight into the range of activities taking place.

Quality of care

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

Staff are skilled at developing and maintaining positive relationships with young people, which encourages them to settle and develop trust. The strong relationships formed between staff and young people, underpinned with appropriate and well-timed humour is used positively by staff as a tool to reduce tension and unrest. As a result, this contributes to reducing the number of serious behaviour management incidents that occur. Staff also use a range of planned strategies to support young people rather than use sanctions. This results in minimising the number of stressful experiences for young people.

Young people confirm that their views, wishes and feelings are actively sought by staff. Young people can influence certain aspects of the home's operation, for example, through weekly young people's meetings and regular individual sessions with key workers. Recently, young people's opinions were sought when new staff were recruited. This provides young people with a feeling of worth and a sense that their opinions and views do matter.

Young people and staff are relaxed in each other's company, which leads to excellent levels of communication taking place on a daily basis. This encourages and supports young people towards making appropriate and more informed decisions about themselves and their future.

Young people understand how they can make a complaint and are confident to do so. The young person's written guide is informative. However, the details for the Children's Rights Director and independent reviewing officers are not included in the guide. In addition the details for Ofsted have not been reviewed.

Young people benefit and thrive in a warm and supportive environment. Their individual needs are clearly identified in excellent care plans and individual risk assessments. This includes identity, religious and cultural needs. Regular reviewing of the plans and strategies ensure young people's needs are current and well met. Young people demonstrate good insight into the plans in place for them, confirming they have input into them. This gives them a sense of direction along with agreed and achievable targets to aim for.

Young people benefit from having excellent relationships with staff, who work openly, transparently and communicate positively with them. As a result young people enjoy living in a relaxing environment and receive care in a trusting atmosphere which allows them to develop greater confidence in themselves and others. Young people have a full appreciation of the high levels of support they receive from staff.

This home is modern, welcoming and homely. A calm, relaxed atmosphere in a bright, modern building gives a good impression of the home and the people living in it. The levels of equipment, fixtures, furnishings and décor are of a high standard. Each young person has their own bedroom, with most being en-suite. Young people

decorate and personalise their rooms to reflect the taste and interest of the occupant. The home is accessible for people with a physical disability and has areas where young people can be either active or relaxed. Internet access is available for both recreational and educational use. Young people take pride in the quality of their environment and facilities. Photographs and mementoes on display reflect young people's positive experiences.

Staff promote healthy lifestyles in a variety of ways. Young people actively engage in a wide range of group activities, individual interests and leisure pursuits. For example, individuals have opportunities to follow their own interests and leisure pursuits, which are usually community-based. These are reflected in the activity planners that are completed weekly. Young people benefit from healthy meals and take an active role in shopping and planning menus. They are encouraged to try unfamiliar foods, appreciate different cultures and try international cuisine. Festivals and religious events are celebrated.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people are well cared for and feel safe living at the home. Staff understand their responsibilities and what they should do should a safeguarding situation arise. This will result in prompt referral to external agencies which ensures young people are appropriately protected. Strong links are in place with external agencies who report good levels of communication between themselves and the home. All staff have undertaken initial safeguarding training, with regular refresher courses completed by longer-serving staff. Overall safeguarding awareness and practice keeps young people safe.

Young people say that bullying is not an area for concern and confirm staff will quickly intervene should an incident occur. Generous staffing levels, coupled with staff being alert to young people's specific needs, minimises opportunities for incidents to occur. This gives young people a feeling of security and general safety.

Staff know how to respond should any young person go missing and are aware of local protocols and practices in place to protect young people. The vulnerability of a young person should they go missing is recognised and well-practiced routines are implemented quickly. Young people are cared for on their return, rather than automatically sanctioned. For example, they have the opportunity to speak with someone independent of the home if they wish, giving them an opportunity to air any grievance they may have to someone who is not a staff member. This adds to the practices in place designed to keep young people safe.

Young people are supported to work positively through difficulties and they recognise sanctions as being fair. Reward systems for good behaviour are in place and young people say that rewards outweigh the number of sanctions imposed. Staff are skilled at diffusing difficult and potentially challenging situations, often with humour when appropriate. This results in the number of serious behaviour management incidents

taking place being minimised. Staff and young people recognise that physical intervention only take place as a last resort. Good monitoring of incidents ensures young people's individual strategies are kept under review and adapted. As a result, the number of serious behaviour management incidents is declining.

Young people benefit from a permanent and relatively experienced staff team. Appropriate recruitment policies, procedures and practice ensure all new staff are suitably cleared prior to taking up their posts. This ensures only suitably checked people have contact with young people.

Young people are protected with a range of risk assessments. Young people participate in regular fire drills and can safely exit the home if needed. Safety checks to maintain a safe environment are regularly undertaken. Individual risk assessments, coupled with coping strategies, promote a safe environment for all young people. Individual strategies are updated in light of reviews of young people's risks and progress. Young people confirm that the home is a safe place to live.

Leadership and management

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

The home is well organised and managed. Following registration at the beginning of the year, the manager has settled into the role and receives good support from the staff team. The manager is enthusiastic, child focused and has a clear vision of how the home should develop and progress. This includes continuing to improve levels of communication around the home. The staff team work well together, are child centred and supportive of the ethos, aims and working practices being developed. They understand their role and responsibilities and work with the support of the management team to address young people's needs.

The staff team receive regular supervision and appraisal to improve their knowledge and working practices. In addition, a quarterly review linked to performance and practice has just been introduced. Most staff either have, or are about to commence training for appropriate professional qualifications. Staff regularly participate in core training events to update their knowledge and skills. This ensures they possess the competences and skills to effectively meet young people's diverse needs.

Both the internal and external monitoring of the home are taking place regularly, with reports from monitoring visits in place. Reports appropriately review performance and identify areas for improvements. Young people contribute to monitoring and can discuss their views.

The manager is well supported and demonstrates an understanding of the strengths of the home and areas in need of improvement. The home has a good record of compliance and has successfully addressed the requirements and recommendations made at the previous inspection. As a result improvements have been made to recruitment practices, in greater consistency regarding the implementation of the formal staff supervision programme and with the quality of the internal monitoring

programme undertaken by the manager.

In addition, there has been an improvement in the detail contained in the records of young people missing from home, coupled with improved practice when they return. Other areas of improvement include the physical intervention records now demonstrating that practice follows policy, greater detail in some areas of planning documentation and with records of staff training being maintained on site. Specific training for senior staff in risk assessment, interview techniques and the requirements required when recruiting staff, has been introduced.

Young people benefit from living in a home that is stable, well managed, organised and striving for continued improvement. This gives them a sense of security and belonging. Most young people describe the home as not just another children's home, but a home and where staff have a genuine commitment to support them through troubled times so they can look to the future with some positivity.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.