

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Robert Hewston
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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 can take seven young people with emotional and/or behaviour difficulties. The home is run by the local authority.

Overall effectiveness

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

This is a good service that positively impacts on young people's lives. The effectiveness with which the home provides personalised care is comprehensive and takes full account of the individual needs of each young person, while promoting positive outcomes for all young people.

Young people feel safe. Their safety is a priority of the home and the staff are proactive in communicating this to young people. Young people have been supported to continue their education and undertake further education opportunities.

Young people's individuality is identified and there is a clear commitment to promoting equality and diversity in the home. While procedures are in place to include young people's wishes, feelings and views in the running of the service there is little evidence that young people contribute to the development and running of the home.

As a result of this visit, two areas for improvement have been identified. One relates to looking at alternative strategies involved with confrontational behaviour and the second relates to refresher training for staff in physical intervention.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure the home regularly reviews incidents of challenging behaviour, examines trends or issues emerging from this, to enable staff to reflect and learn to inform future practice (NMS 3.21)
- ensure staff are supported to manage their responses and feelings arising from working with children, particularly where children display challenging behaviour or have difficult emotional issues. Staff are supported to understand how children's previous experiences can manifest in challenging behaviour (NMS3.10)
- ensure staff are equipped with the skills required to meet the needs of the

children in particular keeping training up to date with practice development such as physical intervention training. (NMS 18.1)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people receive a good level of care which takes into account their age, gender, religion, culture and level of ability. Each young person has a care plan based on their individual assessed needs. Young people benefit from regular attendance at school, contact with parents or significant others and when appropriate they are encouraged to develop their independence skills. Young people are actively encouraged to make everyday choices and take control of their lives wherever possible. As a result, they make good progress which is clearly evidenced in their individual care records. Young people's surveys and discussion confirmed their involvement in everyday choices. However, there is very little written information showing young people's comments in key working sessions and about consequences to poor behaviour.

Young people living in the home often arrive with a reputation for being self-destructive and resistant to care. However, the staff in the home refuse to accept that young people must live up to their reputation. Instead they have high expectations of what young people can achieve and offer them an opportunity to start afresh. They support young people to develop their own individual character by offering them respect and acceptance. As one young person describes it, 'You can be your own person'.

Young people are provided with good opportunities to make good progress in their education. Personal educational plans include realistic targets which young people understand and know they can meet. Where young people have been out of school for some time they are supported and actively encouraged by staff to re-engage in education. Generally young people enjoy good attendance at educational provisions which enables them to make progress and improve their levels of qualifications. Staff work closely with educational establishments to ensure young people are able to learn, improve on their achievements and increase their self-confidence and skills.

Staff work hard to ensure young people attend appointments with health professionals and are gradually supporting each young person to take responsibility for their attendance and for complying with advice given. The staff who prepare meals, provide a healthy variety of food and young people are given opportunities to consider the foundations of healthy lifestyles and good health. As a result of staff practices, young people's health outcomes are improving.

Staff support young people to maintain contact with family and friends and help with transport as necessary. Young people confirmed that they are encouraged to spend quality time with family and friends. Parents and carers are very positive about the care young people receive from the home, saying that staff are friendly and welcoming. Young people benefit from strong relationships with staff. These

opportunities enable young people to develop the skills to build enjoyable, supportive relationships with others and to live in social communities.

Young people are able to make satisfactory progress in building the necessary skills for independence. Staff help young people to work through life skills programmes. Young people spoken to said 'staff do help us in learning about budgeting, cooking on a budget and management of money'. Generally, young people leave the home with key skills in place to cope with the responsibilities of independent living.

Quality of care

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

Young people enjoy constructive relationships with staff. Feedback sheets indicate that they are happy during their stay in the home, with one young person commenting 'I like living at the home it is very comfortable and nice, and I wouldn't change anything'. Young people consider most staff friendly and approachable and say that they listen to their views and wishes. Staff talk fondly about young people and have their best interest at the heart of everything they do. However, staff do not implement behaviour management strategies effectively and consistently. The recording of incidents indicates that staff knowledge, understanding and ability to manage situations are inconsistent. This confuses young people and does not support their ability to develop constructive relationships with peers and others. The new manager has only been in post for less than a month but has already identified areas of improvement in behaviour strategies and is in consultation with the staff team and young people in making changes to areas of sanctions, rewards and general routines.

Young people say that they are always listened to and their wishes and feelings are actively sought and that they can very much influence the way the home is run. Staff will help young people understand if it is not possible to always act upon their wishes. Young people say 'staff are there when you need to talk'. Not all records, in particular key working sessions, show young people's contribution to the discussion and any outcomes or actions.

Young people are cared for in line with their individual placement plan and these plans are comprehensive, well detailed and regularly reviewed. Monthly summaries are shared with the social workers which explain how effective support and guidance has been delivered in reality. Young people said they understand the complaints procedures, although they rarely need to use them. There is information about complaints written in a style suitable for young people to access within the guide to the home.

The good practice of staff enables young people to develop a strong sense of identity, awareness of their cultural heritage and respect for others. Staff model respectful relationships and interest in the background of other people. They encourage young people to ask questions about different races and religions. They require them to consider how their language and views may hurt others.

The home is appropriately located, designed and maintained. Young people benefit from a comfortable environment which is maintained to a satisfactory standard. All young people have their own bedrooms which promotes their personal space and right to privacy. The home is safe and secure as a result of the effective management of health and safety.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Staff are clear about how to recognise the signs of abuse or neglect because they have a full understanding about the thresholds that apply to child protection and safeguarding. All staff receive training and the supervision process promotes good practice. As a result, young people are being protected and their welfare is being promoted.

Safeguarding concerns are addressed promptly and in line with Local Safeguarding Children Board procedures. The service works in line with locally agreed protocols for occasions when young people are found to be missing from care. Staff are also proactive in securing the prompt return of young people who are found to be missing. Young people are also protected by robust staff recruitment procedures which ensure that required checks are completed before staff commence work in the home. Visitors to the home are monitored and their identity is checked before they gain access to the home.

Most young people who arrive at the home have challenging behaviour. Staff make good assessments of each young person's behaviour and of the group dynamics. This enables staff to plan effective interventions to promote positive and rewarding behaviour. However, there are inconsistencies in managing poor behaviour. For example, with regard to a recent incident of disruptive behaviour, resulting in a young person being restrained and given a sanction, staff had not considered other factors that had affected the young person's outburst of behaviour. The new manager has already recognised where extra training is required for staff in different behaviour management strategies.

Young people live in a safe environment. Health and safety is well managed. Safety and servicing checks are carried out as required. Fire safety training, regular checks to the fire systems and fire drills ensure young people and staff know what to do in the event of a fire.

Leadership and management

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

Young people receive care from a committed staff team. Young people's individual needs are often intensive and there is enough staff to support them. Staff work efficiently as a team and report feeling well-supported in their role. The recent

changes in management have not affected the good outcomes for young people.

The home has taken action to address recommendations arising from the previous inspection and these have been satisfactorily met. Young people have regular meetings with the staff and are able to offer opinions on many subjects. Individual work is now being recorded but still needs to show young people's wishes and comments.

The provider meets the aims and objectives in the Statement of Purpose. It comprehensively addresses equality and diversity and there is a strong commitment to anti-discriminatory practice. Young people are provided with an environment where boundaries and expectations are clear and staff practice is consistent. Young people, staff and the placing authority are clear about the aims and objectives of the home and what services and facilities it provides.

Staff are provided with good training, support and resources to enable them to understand the developmental needs of young people. However, due to issues out of the home's control, refresher courses on physical intervention have been put on hold. All staff have completed a physical intervention course but have not kept to the recommended date to complete refresher courses. This has impacted with five staff members not able to sleep-in and not able to assist young people and staff when young people need to be held for their own safety. Staff receive excellent induction training which covers all mandatory areas such as safeguarding, behaviour management and first aid.

The home demonstrates a capacity for continuing improvement, based on its track record and performance since its previous inspection. The management team has robust systems in place to ensure ongoing monitoring is taking place and that information collated leads to improvement and development.

Records are clear, up to date, stored securely, and contribute to an understanding of the young person's life. 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.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.