

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Debbie Foster
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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.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: a service that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

Good: a service that exceeds minimum requirements

Adequate: a service that only meets minimum requirements

Inadequate: a service that does not meet minimum requirements

Overall effectiveness

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

Young people living in this home benefit greatly from an experienced staff group who demonstrate a passionate commitment and determination to addressing welfare and safety issues. Staff are starting to make a difference to young people's lives in the short space of time since a number of young people have moved to live in their new home. As a result of this, outcomes for young people are adequate. Young people are achieving more positive outcomes in relation to their confidence, emotional resilience, family relationships and preparation for independence. Socialisation has increased whilst anti-social behaviours have equally reduced. Young people are very positive about the care they receive at the home. All young people said they get on with all the staff and named particular staff members who they would go and talk to if concerned about something.

Young people confirm that their views are genuinely sought and acted upon. The staff encourage them to make decisions about their lives and influence the way that the home is run. The facilitating of contact with family and other important people to young people is carried out well. Effective support is in place to help young people learn skills that they will need for later in life.

Staff ensure that young people are looked after in a way that is particular to how they are and want to be. Immediately, staff are challenging barriers and creating opportunities for young people to reach their full potential. This is particular to education and safeguarding. The young people are starting to benefit greatly from the efforts of the staff to promote the value of education and to encourage good attendance.

The staff work closely with other services to meet the range of young people's needs. Although, staff are clearly aware of young people's assessed needs, the quality of written placement plans is not as consistent and not all of these clearly set when young people's needs have been met and the progress they are making. There are gaps in the key work sessions to demonstrate that the ongoing direct work with young people has taken place to reflect the aims and objectives set out in the care plans.

Effective risk assessments and fire safety practices help to keep young people safe. Staff are experienced, well trained and competent. Young people clearly benefit from the strong leadership provided by the manager to a cohesive and adaptable staff team. There is good monitoring to maintain and improve the quality of care in the home. However, there is no formal development plan in place to demonstrate how the service is to proceed to improve further the quality of care for young people. The provider's monitoring is not routinely evaluating whether appropriate and safe practices are used by the staff when physical interventions are used. Although, all health needs are identified there are short falls in some areas. This is where ongoing keywork sessions are required to assist young people's understanding of how to follow a healthier lifestyle to promote good health into their adulthood.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure all young people's health is promoted in accordance with their placement plan and staff are clear about what responsibilities and decisions are delegated to them. In particular, that key and direct work sessions are sufficiently undertaken to address and meet the identified all health needs of individual young people (NMS 6.5)
- ensure staff work further with educational provider's to maximise each child's achievement and to minimise any underachievement (NMS 8.4)
- ensure a written development plan is in place, that identifies the specific changes in the operation and resources of the service, to bring further improvement or development to the quality of care for young people (NMS 15.2)
- ensure that there are clear and effective procedures for monitoring and controlling the activities of the home. In particular, this refers to the provider monitoring of the physical intervention records. (NMS21.1)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people are beginning to form positive relationships with staff members and

starting to emotionally benefit from some consistency in their lives. Young people are starting to recognise their own emotions and learn how to express these more positively. Young people are supported to develop healthy lifestyles and this includes young people attending routine health appointments. This has brought about some improved health outcomes for young people. Young people enjoy a well-balanced diet to maintain healthy outcomes. Work is ongoing in relation to assisting young people to understand some health risks, which includes smoking.

Most young people are at the start of their journey to be reintroduced back into full-time education. Staff are determined and persevering to ensure regular attendance for each young person in their educational placements. Immediate action has been taken by the staff to address short falls in educational placements and rectify any barriers to bring a positive way forward for young people. Young people are well supported to maintain daily routines to benefit their education. Progress in education is adequate with young people making small steps forward to achieve personal goals. For example, this includes having suitable bedtimes to enable them to be refreshed and ready to go to school the following day, praise for attendance and being supported to get to school on time by staff providing transport when required. However, for the majority of young people, their school attendance is not good and this is affecting their ability to achieve.

Young people have positive contact with family, friends and significant others. This promotes their identity needs and sense of belonging. A young person said, 'I see my mum twice a week and speak to her on the phone every day.' Staff understand the benefits of contact and build positive relationships with parents. This ensures improved communication and understanding between all parties, which is in young people's best interests.

Young people are very well supported by staff to practise independence skills including domestic tasks, and cooking, appropriate to their age and understanding. All young people take an active role in the preparation of meals and cooking on a daily basis. It forms an important focus on family life in the home. Young people are enthusiastic about taking part in this activity and have developed a good knowledge and skills in cooking meals. A young person said 'I enjoy cooking' and another said, 'X bakes a 'mean' cake.' Young people's experience of foods from different cultures has been expanded and they said they really enjoyed their meals.

Since moving into the home, young people are going out and about more, getting involved in a variety of activities and social experiences in the community. Young people played cards, hide and seek and football with the staff and sang on the karaoke machine during the inspection. There was great interaction between everyone, laughter and lots of smiling faces. A young person said they have enjoyed, 'Going to Castleton, night walks, going to music events and playing games with the staff.' This is broadening their life experiences, social skills and is assisting in developing their self-confidence.

Quality of care

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

Young people living in this home benefit greatly from an experienced staff group that demonstrates enthusiastically their commitment to addressing young people's care and safety needs. Staff say, 'I love my job, we are a committed staff team who care about the kids and make sure we do are very best to keep them safe and see them making progress.' Young people confirm this saying, 'All the staff are great and they help you if you need things'; 'I get on with all the staff but would go to x if I was worried about something is'; and, 'They are always talking to us about keeping ourselves safe.' Young people enjoy warm relationships with staff in the home and there is good rapport between them. Staff speak in a proud manner about their young people and their achievements. Staff say, 'One of our main strengths is that we build strong relationships with young people and this helps them to trust us and engage with us more.'

Young people confirm that their views are genuinely sought and acted upon. The staff are innovative in the way that they help young people to make decisions about their lives and influence the way that the home is run. Staff provide opportunities for daily chats and one-to-one discussions, key worker sessions and residents' meetings. Young people are supported and encouraged to attend their statutory reviews to be able to give their views. The monthly monitoring by the safeguarding officer includes opportunities for young people to comment upon the quality of care at the home. One young person said, 'I chose the colour I wanted to have my bedroom painted and the posters for my walls.' Any cases where it is not possible to act upon young people's wishes are explained carefully to them. Young people confirm this saying that, 'Staff are fair.'

Young people say that they are confident to complain and understand how to do so. Any complaints received are clearly recorded to reflect the action taken by the staff and the outcomes.

Effective policies and practice around the storage, handling, administration and disposal of medication safeguard young people's welfare.

Admissions to the home are planned and, where appropriate, the young person and their family are involved in that planning. Young people can visit the home before they move in to meet people and get information about the home. Staff find out about young people's differences, routines, strengths and areas for development. They use different agencies and resources to help them to meet the young people's needs. The management team has recently worked to improve the matching process of young people to the service to ensure they can meet the needs of the young person as well as the rest of the young people currently living at the home.

Staff are clearly aware of young people's assessed needs and written placement plans outline how young people's needs will be met. Focused one-to-one work provides young people with guidance, advice and support. However, these are not always reflecting all the content of the care plan. This does not show the full extent of the action taken by the staff to meet the identified needs of the young person.

Therefore, this is not on all occasions evidencing clearly or identifying continued areas of support that young people require or where progress is being made in their lives. In particular, this relates to health risks, such as smoking.

The staff appreciate that the individual young people may have needs arising from diversity. The young people receive individualised care and support. Where necessary, staff ensure support services are involved in the health, care and education of the young people. The home has links with a wide range of helping agencies, and very good practice has helped to quickly provide services to suit each individual young person.

The staff work in a determined manner to ensure that appropriate education placements are sourced quickly and, as a result, young people's education placements are put in place to assist them in attending and achieving. Contact between the home and a school is frequent and effective. For some this includes a daily telephone call and a visit by a member of staff to the school. This enables staff to support young people successfully with homework or personal targets. A notable area of strength is the staff's close communication and support of other professionals working in education to sustain and increase the young people's time in the provision. Personal education plans are in place and these are reviewed regularly. There are space, resources and facilities at the home to enable the completion of homework. A computer is available for the young people to use for educational purposes and well-monitored internet access is available. However, the majority of young people have only recently been admitted to the home, with a history of poor school attendance. Although, school attendance is increasing, it is still not good and has not yet improved all young people's attainment levels.

Young people live in a suitably-maintained property, which is close to a local shopping area and accessible public transport. The home is in a good state of structural and decorative repair. It provides a modern comfortable environment for young people. Young people have their own bedrooms, which they can personalise to reflect their individuality. A young person said, 'I think we have a nice home to live in, it's comfortable.' Since the last inspection some areas have been decorated and these include the hallway and two bedrooms. This ensures young people are living in a pleasant home with adequate facilities to meet their needs. There is a good maintenance and repair programme for the building, furniture and equipment, and any damage is repaired promptly. The garden is maintained and safe. The home is clean and there are homely touches throughout.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people live in a physically-safe environment and are protected from harm. Staff give young people's safety the highest priority and they are trained in safeguarding. They are able to recognise the signs and symptoms of abuse, including issues in relation to young people's personal circumstances, and know exactly what they need to do to protect young people. Young people are protected from bullying.

All young people confirmed that there is no bullying happening and staff would prevent it. Positive work with young people has resulted in incidents of going missing and risk-taking behaviour reducing.

Consistently well-written risk assessments are recorded to help the staff understand what action to take to minimise the identified risks. This develops young people's understanding and the reasons adults are concerned. As a result, young people's risk-taking behaviours reduce and they feel cared for and protected. Staff ensure plans for young people's safety are consistently put into practice and address young people's needs. They are knowledgeable about young people's specific vulnerabilities. This supports staff to ensure young people are safe at home and promotes their safety in the community.

Sanctions are relevant and reflect the age and understanding of the young people. Any sanctions imposed are reviewed regularly for appropriateness and effectiveness. Personalised behaviour management strategies are used. These contain good, individualised details for staff to follow when managing young people's behaviour. It is very rare that physical restraint is used to manage behaviour at the home. Staff are trained in the provider's de-escalation policy and authorised intervention techniques. Record keeping relating to this is good and there is evidence that it is monitored by the manager to identify patterns or trends that can be used to support young people further.

Young people are protected from any hazards by a wide range of health and safety procedures, risk assessments and checks. Staff carry out regular health and safety checks, including fire drills, to ensure the premises are safe and young people know what to do in case of an emergency. There are suitable systems in place to ensure that visitors to the home are suitably checked and supervised to protect young people.

Leadership and management

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

Young people benefit from a very supportive management team, who understands their needs and wishes. The manager is experienced and knowledgeable about his role and responsibilities and provides clear, accountable leadership. He understands the strengths and areas for improvement in the home.

All previous requirement and recommendation made at the last inspection have been met in that a report format has been devised to be supplied to Ofsted on the conducted of the home. Several areas in the home have been decorated to provide a comfortable and homely environment that is well maintained for young people to live in.

A Statement of Purpose is available to inform professionals and members of the public about how care is provided at the home. There is a good children's guide to the statement which is appropriate to the age and understanding of the children

accommodated. Young people receive a copy of it before they come to live at the home so that they know what to expect if they go to live there.

There is a consistent staff team which have a broad range of skills and experience among its members. Staff explain their practice which reflects the policies they must follow. Management support and supervision are described as, 'Very good and regular' and, 'Good support tool, to discuss practice and my development as a worker' by staff who clearly value the beneficial contributions of the manager.

The young people are receiving care from competent staff that are experienced and appropriately trained to meet their needs. All staff are trained in a wide variety of safety and childcare subjects. An ongoing programme of regular refresher training is provided in a range of subjects to enhance the staff team's competency to meet the needs of the young people.

The manager has a detailed system for monitoring that reports on and evaluates the administration systems of the home and identifies areas of weakness. This is supported by regular unannounced visits from the provider to monitor and improve the quality of care at the home. Overall, these effective evaluations help to ensure that standards at the home continue to improve. However, the provider's monitoring visits are not routinely evaluating that all incidents of physical intervention have been used appropriately and that these are in line with the policies, procedures and in the best interest of young people.

Overall, the manager understands the home's strengths and areas for development. However, there is no written development plan to evidence how and when the aims and objectives identified are to be achieved to improve the quality of care for young people.

Overall, records are of a good standard. This facilitates good communication with other professionals as well as ensuring young people have a permanent and secure record of their history. Young people's individual case files are stored confidentially and are arranged in a manner that makes them useable by staff and yet accessible to young people. The young people know that they can have access to their records.

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.