

Inspection report for children's home

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<b>Inspector</b>	David Coulter
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<b>Provision subtype</b>	Children's home

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## Service information

### Brief description of the service

This is a registered care home for five young people of either sex aged between 12 years and 18 years old. The home provides 24-hour care for young people with emotional or behavioural difficulties. The home is part of a small private organisation which provides residential childcare, leaving care services, fostering services, family outreach and a residential family centre.

### The inspection judgements and what they mean

**Outstanding:** a service of exceptional quality that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

**Good:** a service of high quality 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 **outstanding**.

The home continues to provide extremely good quality care to a group of vulnerable young people within a warm and nurturing environment. It is clear that the physical, social and emotional needs of young people have been appropriately identified and effective strategies developed to ensure they are appropriately met. Evidence indicates that young people respond positively to the homes consistently applied behavioural boundaries and the support and guidance provided by staff. Young people are supported by a group of staff who advocate effectively on their behalf and secure additional resources and services from other agencies when required. Staff are aware of the particular needs of adolescents and help them acquire a range of social and life-skills that help them develop their independence.

Staff have aspirations for the young people in their care and there is an expectation they will lead full and active lives during their placements. Staff reinforce positive behaviour and success is recognised and celebrated. All the current residents have either education or training placements that they regularly attend. Young people participate in a range of social and recreational activities within the home and local community. Young people spoken with talked in positive terms about their lives within the home and special mention was made of the support and encouragement they received from staff.

No recommendations or actions were identified during this inspection and evidence

indicates the home continues to offer a quality of care which is of a very high standard.

## **Outcomes for children and young people**

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

The home provides a warm and nurturing environment to a vulnerable group of young people, the majority of whom have experienced significant uncertainty and insecurity in their lives. Each young person is treated as an individual with their own specific, physical, social and cultural needs. Staff work alongside each individual to develop strategies on how their particular care needs can be met. Staff encourage young people to develop aspirations in regard to education and employment. The home's independence training programme is extremely successful in providing opportunities for young people to acquire a range of new social and life-skills. While such opportunities allow individuals to increase their knowledge and skills it also contributes significantly to an increase in their self-confidence.

Young people respond positively to the clear and consistent behavioural boundaries provided by staff and once settled live full and active lives. Staff are clearly aware of the difficulties some young people experience in linking their behaviour with possible consequences and regularly discuss behavioural issues with them. Positive behaviour is reinforced with praise and rewards and sanctions are only used for serious misdemeanours. Although young people do not always comply with behavioural boundaries, they feel that the system is generally fair. Young people have responded positively to the homes approach and there is clear evidence that incidents of anti-social and inappropriate behaviour have decreased.

All the current residents have education or training placements that they attend regularly. Young people have established trusting relationships with staff and benefit greatly from the advice and guidance they receive. Young people spoken with said they could discuss personal issues with any member of staff. Young people are supported in maintaining contact with members of their families and are helped to understand the circumstances that brought them into care.

The current residents all benefit from good health and are encouraged to adopt healthy lifestyles by eating wisely and taking regular exercise. Young people access the home's own well equipped gym as well as a number of leisure and recreational facilities in the local area. Young people can exercise choice over what they eat and are provided opportunities to develop their own culinary skills. Young people spoke in positive terms about both the quantity and quality of food on offer and appreciated the efforts of staff to introduce them to the cuisines of different cultures. Regular health checks ensure specialist help is sought to address specific areas of concern. All activities associated with health and personal care are dealt with sensitively. Young people are helped to assume responsibility for monitoring their own health and are provided with advice and guidance on issues such as the use of alcohol, drugs and sexual health.

## Quality of care

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

All the members' of staff spoken with were conversant with the care needs of the current residents and were able to illustrate the progress they have made since their admission. The religious and cultural needs of each individual are clearly identified as part of the admission process and suitable arrangements made to ensure they are effectively met. Staff are effective advocates for the young people in their care and have been successful in liaising with a number of educational and training bodies to ensure they can access appropriate courses.

The views of young people are effectively sought by staff on all aspects of their lives. Each individual is encouraged to assert their independence within the home by exercising choice over such things as the décor in their rooms, food and participation in leisure activities. While all young people are made aware of the homes complaints procedure on admission, staff are proactive in addressing any concerns before they develop into a formal complaint. All complaints are taken seriously, recorded, investigated and a response provided to the complainant. Young people spoken with confirmed they were regularly consulted and felt they were able to exercise choice over many areas of their lives.

Staff actively promote the concept of mutual respect and there is an expectation that young people will tolerate each other and co-exist peacefully. Staff continuously monitor the behaviour and mood of each young person and identify antecedents and possible triggers surrounding significant incidents. All major incidents are appropriately recorded and reported. Staff confront discriminatory behaviour and engage young people in discussions about the pernicious consequences of prejudice. Young people are left in no doubt about what is and is not acceptable behaviour. Close supervision helps prevent any bullying. Staff use a range of diversionary techniques to de-escalate challenging situations. Young people are helped to achieve emotional maturity by developing strategies to manage their anxieties and control their anger. Physical interventions are rarely used and only deployed if it is felt a young person is putting themselves or others at significant risk. There have been no interventions in recent times.

Young people are helped to develop self-discipline and there is an expectation that each will meet their daily educational, training and work commitments and by so doing develop a good work ethic. Individuals are expected to be up and ready to leave the home on time each day. Even though many young people have to undertake time-consuming journey's to their educational placements, attendance levels are consistently high. Good lines of communication have been established between care and educational and training staff that ensures that information relating to the progress of each young person is appropriately shared.

Praise and encouragement is used to reinforce positive behaviour and helps to bolster each individual's self-confidence. Young people respond positively to the homes approach and appreciate the fact that they are treated as 'young adults'. The progress young people are making made is reflected in a reduction in anti-social behaviours and an increase in their abilities to make and sustain relationships. Each young person's progress is reflected in their looked after children reviews.

During the inspection young people were observed to be at ease in their surroundings and the company of staff. Social interaction was observed to be spontaneous and warm. It is clear the young people enjoy and respond positively to the care and attention they receive from staff. The homes clear behavioural boundaries create a safe and predictable environment in which young people can grow and develop.

The home provides a warm homely environment that is structurally sound and in exceptionally good decorative order. Each young person is provided with a bedroom that is designated as their own 'personal space' that they can access at any time. There is an expectation that each young person will keep their rooms clean and tidy. The home is situated in a good location being within walking distance of shops and major transport links. Young people are encouraged to develop their own interests and hobbies and staff introduce them to a range of activities both in the home and local community. Activities in the local community are well planned, appropriately staffed and organised around the needs of each young person. Young people are provided with regular holidays and the current residents spent two enjoyable weeks with staff by the coast during the summer.

### **Safeguarding children and young people**

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

Young people are cared for by a group of staff who have been recruited via a rigorous recruitment and selection process that determined their fitness to work with vulnerable young people. All new staff have to complete a well-developed induction programme that introduces them to the homes comprehensive range of policies, procedures and accepted working practices. All staff are made aware of their individual responsibilities in regard to the reporting of any safeguarding worries or concerns. Staff aim to ensure that young people do not have contact with inappropriate adults.

Although young people are actively encouraged to become more independent, staff are clearly aware of their vulnerabilities and their often limited ability to assess risk. Safeguarding underpins all aspects of the care offered by the home and an assessment process identifies the particular vulnerabilities and risks associated with each young person's behaviour and level of understanding. Staff are successful in working alongside young people to develop strategies that will keep them safe. For example, young people use mobile phones to keep them in contact with staff when they are out in the local community. In an attempt to protect young people from

exploitation staff establish where young people go and identify the individuals they are associating with. In the event of a young person going missing, staff relay information to the police and placing authority. Although young people still go missing, appropriate staffing levels and effective supervision has decreased the frequency of such incidents.

Young people reside in a property that has been developed to ensure it is free of any unnecessary hazards. Staff carry out regular health and safety checks within the home and garden. Access to the home is limited and all visitors have to report to staff and sign in. The fire alarm system is tested weekly and regular fire evacuations ensure staff and young people remain conversant with procedures.

### **Leadership and management**

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

The home is extremely well managed by an experienced manager who has high expectations of staff and young people. She is ably supported by a stable and enthusiastic senior staff team. All staff subscribe to the home's 'good parenting' ethos that ensures meeting the needs of young people remains the focus of their work. Good communication between staff operating on different shifts and regular staff meetings aid consistency in the delivery of care. Staff are well supported by the manager and regular supervision by an external consultant provides opportunities to reflect on their practice and aid their professional development. Staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities and have access to a comprehensive range of policies and procedures that are updated in response to regulatory and legislative changes. Staff keep abreast of developments within the child care field and regularly access training opportunities. A record is kept on staff files of all courses attended

The home has well established quality assurance systems that include monthly monitoring visits by an external consultant. Comprehensive progress reports are produced at regular intervals in line with regulatory requirements. The home's manager and staff have a clear commitment to the continuing improvement of the service and are aiming to further develop the therapeutic support they can offer. The home is appropriately resourced and evidence indicates it operates in the best interests of the young people currently accommodated. Staff have created a homely environment which is well maintained and suitable to the needs of its adolescent residents. Records and documents contain recent and relevant information and are stored in appropriately locked facilities.

## 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.