

Inspection report for children's home

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<b>Inspector</b>	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 provides full time residential care for up to five young people of either sex aged from 8 to 17 years. Emergency placements are accepted with certain conditions. Young people with emotional or behavioural, physical or learning disabilities can be accommodated. In addition to providing accommodation for up to four young people in the main building, an annex designed for semi-independent living is also available.

### Overall effectiveness

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

Young people make excellent progress in relation to their starting points both socially and educationally. They thrive in a nurturing, supportive environment underpinned with clear and consistent boundaries. Individual needs are identified with plans and strategies put into place to address them.

Young people are cared for by an experienced staff team, who work positively in a none-punitive way. The management and organisation of the home is outstanding and the manager understands its strengths and areas for future development. Excellent relationships and a feeling of mutual respect between young people and staff enhances the progress made by young people.

The ethos and working practices adopted by the home encourages and allows young people to re-engage positively with their education, families and social contacts. The home is well established in its local community and enjoys positive community relationships.

Although comprehensive and child focused, the young person's guide does not contain all the information required about contacting specified people. Whilst young people and staff say that rewards for good behaviour far outweighs sanctions, the home has no formal system to record this. The home has developed links with local safeguarding agencies and the police missing from homes co-ordinator, but has yet to secure a copy of the agreed protocol regarding missing children.

### Areas for improvement

## Recommendations

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

- introduce a system of recording that evidences the rewarding of positive behaviour by young people (NMS 3.8)
- ensure a copy of the agreed local protocol with police and safeguarding agencies regarding missing children is held on site (NMS 5.6)
- ensure the contact details for the Children's Rights Director and a young person's independent reviewing officer are included in the young person's guide. (NMS 13.5)

## Outcomes for children and young people

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

The ethos and working practices of the home are designed to work positively with young people who may have had poor life experiences prior to admission. Individual needs are recognised, with plans and strategies based on those needs, quickly put into place. The positive responses received from young people underpins the homes commitment to develop trust and provide support that allows social, educational and personal areas of young people's lives to flourish. Achieving this is viewed as a particular strength for the home as it is possible to chart the considerable progress being made by young people by reviewing planning documents, risk assessments and general records as well as speaking with the young people themselves.

All young people have contact with family, friends and other appropriate adults. Examples of contact visits being facilitated took place during the inspection. Young people are satisfied with their own contact arrangements, which are clearly laid out in planning documentation.

Young people of school age are fully engaged in full time education. Alternative arrangements for those who have left school are either in place or being sought. The home has excellent contacts with local colleges and a good track record of encouraging and supporting young people with further education. The ethos of the home is to promote education with routines for school and non-school days clearly laid out.

The educational outcomes for young people based on their starting points when first admitted, are outstanding. Staff work co-operatively with schools and colleges to support young people in their education. Evidence to support this can be found by talking with enthusiastic and committed staff and young people. For example, the high expectations for potential GCSE results was discussed with one young person and was later, fully endorsed by their head teacher.

The health of young people is promoted positively. All are appropriately registered and receive the full range of health services available to them in the community. Access to more specialised input such as mental health services is made where necessary. Health and health promotion plans form part of the planning documentation and are updated regularly. The home stores and records any administering of both prescribed and non prescribed medication efficiently. All staff receive training to administer medication.

The home is well established within the community and actively encourages young people to take full advantage of the resources available. For example, the home facilitates all young people, whatever their disability, to participate fully in community based activities. Young people are encouraged and supported to become involved in community activities. For example, one young person recently raised money for the Haiti earthquake appeal through a sponsored walk he helped to organise.

## Quality of care

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

Staff are skilled at forming positive relationships with young people which encourages them to settle and develop trust. This was observed during the admission process of one young person as the inspection progressed. Young people benefit and thrive on the excellent individualised support provided, allowing them to focus and make positive decisions about their own futures. This support may centre on judicial, family, health and educational issues, although more usually, it is a combination of any number of these factors. Generous staffing ratios allow for individual support along with individual need to be addressed positively.

Young people confirm that their views, wishes and feelings are actively sought by staff and feel they can influence certain aspects of the homes operation. They give the regular young people's meetings and key worker sessions as examples of where they can air their views. However, excellent levels of communication exist and young people were observed with staff discussing a range of issues as part of the normal interaction that takes place daily.

Young people understand how to make a complaint and are provided with both visual and written information. The guide to the unit provided on admission contains details about their rights, along with the contact details of a range of independent organisations and bodies that champion the rights of young people. However, the details of the Children's Rights Director and a young person's independent reviewing officer are currently not available to them.

Staff are skilled in engaging young people positively, who benefit and thrive in a supportive and nurturing environment. Individual needs, which includes identity, religious and cultural are clearly identified to form the basis of the homes extensive and regularly updated care planning documentation. A strength of the home is to review its working practices and look to improve. An excellent example of this is with the recent introduction of an outcomes progress file for each young person. The file contains detailed written information, supplemented with photographs which details the progress being made. This is viewed as an excellent development to the planning documentation, which is deemed as outstanding.

Young people confirm they are aware of their own plans and have input and access to them. They speak well of staff, with whom they have excellent relationships. Staff and young people were observed as being at ease with each other and genuinely enjoying each others company. Staff have an open, transparent way of working, which aids the high level of daily communication taking place between themselves and young people. This also promotes trust.

Upon entry, a visitor is faced with a warm, welcoming, homely environment with staff and young people mixing freely with each other. A calm, relaxed atmosphere in a bright, modern building gives an excellent first impression of the home and the people in it. The levels of equipment, fixtures, furnishings and décor are of a high calibre. Each young person has their own bedroom which can be personalised to reflect the taste and interest of the occupant. The home is accessible for people with a physical disability and has numerous areas where young people can be either active or relaxed. Internet access is available for both recreational and educational

use.

The dining areas allows meals to be taken together, which are seen as enjoyable, social occasions. Whilst the home has its own transport, its location means there is good access to public transport as well as a variety of community facilities. Young people are relaxed and at ease in their environment and take pride in the quality of their living accommodation. The home is festooned with recent photographs and mementoes of events and activities shared by staff and young people.

Young people recognise the high levels of support given to them by staff and whilst acknowledging the pivotal role of their key worker, they view the whole staff group as being supportive. Staff are proactive and when necessary, flexible, to allow the needs of young people to be met. For example, in ensuring specific interests and hobbies enjoyed by young people prior to their admission continue to take place, despite the distances involved.

Staff promote healthy lifestyles with young people actively engaged in wide ranging group activities as well as being encouraged to pursue their own individual interests and leisure pursuits. For example, one young person was away on a foreign holiday with staff when the inspection took place. Activities are planned on a weekly basis with a strong input from young people.

Young people are encouraged to eat healthily with many able to recognise the nutritional values of eating a good diet. Whilst no young people currently have specific dietary needs, individual tastes are catered for along with encouragement to try unfamiliar foods. Most young people have an appreciation of different cultures and a range of international cuisine. For example, the home recently had a Spanish themed evening.

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

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

Although not tested since the previous inspection, the home has excellent systems in place to safeguard and protect young people. Staff receive regular training to update their knowledge and have a full understanding of safeguarding policies, procedures and actions they should take, if an incident arises. Discussion undertaken with representatives from external agencies charged with specific safeguarding duties, confirm the excellent links and high levels of ongoing co-operation that exist between themselves and the home.

Information provided in various formats make it clear to young people that bullying is the subject of zero tolerance. Staff are alert to a young person's potential to bully or be bullied and work proactively to minimise the number of incidents occurring. Young people say that bullying is not an issue of concern to them and confirm that staff do not tolerate any form of bullying and are quick to intervene if it does. Bullying is monitored with the views of young people challenged regularly. For example, minutes from both staff and young people's meetings show this is a much discussed and monitored area. Each young person has in place a specific risk assessment linked to the possibility of being bullied.

Since the previous inspection, there have been no incidents of young people going missing. However, the systems for dealing with missing children are understood by staff and imbedded into working practices. The home reports a good working relationship with the local Police co-ordinator, but has yet to receive a copy of the local protocol regarding missing children.

Young people's care plans and risk assessments take account of a young person's potential to go missing and their vulnerability should they do so. Staff have worked successfully with young people who have a history of absconding to the point where any young person missing from the home is a rare occurrence. Appropriate systems to record any incident are in place.

Young people say that any sanctions or punishments are fair and confirm that rewards for good behaviour far outweigh the number of sanctions imposed. Staff say they work on developing positive relationships rather than imposing punitive measures. This is confirmed by the young people themselves and in the records, which show that sanctions are rare. However, no formal record of rewards currently exists. On the occasions when young people do challenge boundaries, the initial response of staff is to work through the issues positively, without immediately reverting to sanctions. Examples of this occurring were observed during the inspection.

Incidents of physical intervention are fully recorded with evidence of excellent management oversight and monitoring. For example, the manager recently changed the staff teams around, mixing younger staff with more experienced ones, which contributed significantly to a reduction of incidents with one young person. Staff are clear that physical intervention is very much a last resort and are comfortable using the positive relationships built up with young people to diffuse difficult situations. All staff receive initial and refresher training in positive handling techniques.

Young people benefit from a permanent, experienced staff team. Appropriate recruitment policies and procedures are in place, with new staff being suitably cleared prior to taking up their posts. Thorough recruitment procedures that meet with regulatory requirement and current good practice are in place.

Staff and young people are protected with a range of risk assessments which are regularly updated. Service contracts for fire, gas and electrical equipment are in place. Young people participate in regular fire drills and understand the evacuation procedures. Regular safety checks are undertaken around the home on a regular basis.

Individual risk assessments, coupled with coping strategies are in place for each young person and these are reviewed and updated regularly. All young people confirm that the home is a safe place to live and none have any issues or concerns linked to behaviour management.

### **Leadership and management**

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

The organisation and management of the home is outstanding. A strong, child focused manager, with excellent communication skills, has a clear vision on how the home should operate. A committed, energetic staff group are supportive of the management team and work together in a team centred approach that puts the needs of young people first. The ethos and working practices of the unit meets the aims and objectives set out in the Statement of Purpose.

Young people benefit from having a well supported staff team, who receive regular supervision and appraisal in a format that identifies where improvements to staff's knowledge and working practice can be made. Most staff either have, or are about to commence appropriate professional qualification training. An active, staff core training programme is ongoing, allowing staff to update knowledge and skills as well as addressing the diverse needs of young people in their care. This ensures they possess the competences and skills required to work effectively with them.

Both the internal and external monitoring of the home is outstanding with comprehensive monitoring reports being completed regularly. The reports not only review the home's own performance but identifies areas for continued improvement. The monitoring processes cover the required areas, which includes contact and discussion with young people.

The manager understands the strengths of the unit and areas where it could perform better. A written development plan, currently being revised, is in place. The home has an excellent record in compliance, with no actions or recommendations carried over from the previous inspection.

Young people live in an energetic, lively, forward thinking home that works individually with them to address their needs. The staff group bonds well, is enthusiastic and committed to the ethos, aims and working practices of the unit. They understand their role and responsibilities and work with a dedicated, team centred approach that provides young people with a high level of consistency and an outstanding level of care.

Equality and diversity practice is **outstanding**.