

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Angus Mackay
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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 is a large detached property set in countryside on the outskirts of the nearest town, where young people can access all public transport and main-line stations. It is set in its own grounds with a large grassed area for ball games and an area set to gardens. The home is currently registered for five children with emotional and behavioural difficulties. The home has an activity and school block, a large lounge/dining area, five bedrooms, a large bathroom and two offices.

Overall effectiveness

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

Children are looked after by caring, dedicated and extremely patient staff. There is excellent communication between children, staff and their families. Social workers and families believe that the children are well looked after and that staff keep them well informed and engaged in the children's lives. Social workers and reviewing officers say that young children make exceptional progress with extreme behavioural, emotional and health problems.

Good leadership, management and monitoring of the home ensure that care planning is of a high standard and that children show significant improvement in their behaviour and outcomes. Greater consistency in supervision, provision of rotas and recording will enhance the service to children.

Children receive good care and excellent support in attending and achieving in school. They say that staff involve them in meaningful ways in the management of the home and in their own care and placement planning. They say they feel safe in the home and know how to stay safe. One social worker says that he has nothing but praise for the home. The home has experienced some difficulties with older adolescents who have challenged boundaries but staff persevered with these extreme difficulties and ensured that GCSE examinations were completed.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure that all staff are provided with regular supervision by appropriately qualified and experienced staff (NMS 19.4)

- ensure rotas are available to demonstrate the deployment of staff and that the number and deployment of staff, both as a staff group and on individual shifts, can fulfil the home's Statement of Purpose and meet the individual needs of all children resident in the home (NMS17.1)
- ensure that staff fully record all methods used to de-escalate confrontations or potentially violent behaviour (NMS 3.12)
- ensure that all children have an up to date risk assessment in relation to the risks associated with going missing and that this is in line with the home's policy. (NMS 5.2)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Children gain improved life chances and outcomes during their time in the home. Staff assist children to maintain or develop contact with their families and friends, aid them in understanding past life events and in achieving healthy lifestyles and positive engagement in school. Children work through periods of upset, anger and rage with assistance from staff showing them how to resolve these issues positively. An independent reviewing officer said that he was most impressed with the home which had allowed a very angry and violent child to come on in leaps and bounds with staff showing great patience and perseverance with exceptionally difficult behaviours.

Children say that they make significant improvement in the home with help from the staff. One said that he was able to control his temper and calm more quickly and was not restrained now. Children say that they feel safe in the home and that staff deal with any difficulties including bullying immediately. They learn self help and budgeting skills from an early age to aid in their sense of control and engagement in the home.

The home has a diverse staff group who take care to address all care and cultural needs children people have including religious beliefs, diet and personal care.

All children attend school on a daily basis and have made significant progress there. One social worker said that children received a lot of care and support to help them to achieve in school. This summer, those old enough sat national examinations in a range of subjects including English, Mathematics, Physical Education, Art and Science.

Relatives and social workers say that the home provides a lot of fun events, like the recent sports day, for the children which they are invited to, allowing the children to achieve success and to share this with them developing their self-esteem. Children are encouraged to develop their relationships with family members and learn how to interact appropriately with guidance from staff. A social worker said that one child from a severely fragmented home background could now form relationships because staff had shown him he was valued and well thought of for the first time in his life. Children achieve progression in their sense of personal value and worth and are

proud of the awards and visual displays of their success, activities and holidays.

Children, social workers and family members say that staff help the children to develop healthy lifestyles. They are encouraged to take part in physical activities and are constantly reminded about healthy eating. Staff aid children's understanding of all health issues by key work sessions and informal discussions on topics including sexual health, drugs, alcohol abuse, smoking, and person specific medical issues. Children are assisted to utilise mental health services, where necessary and are helped to attend all medical appointments to ensure their health issues are addressed. Staff are excellent at monitoring children's progress and note small changes in them which they feedback to consultants to aid children's healthy development. Social workers noted significant improvement in children's underlying health issues due to the work of the staff in the home.

Quality of care

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

Children are relaxed with staff and visitors being polite and engaging positively in conversations. Staff intervene appropriately with children setting clear boundaries and expectations with them and treating them with respect. Children say they like the staff and are able to negotiate with them avoiding conflict and gaining satisfactory outcomes.

Children say that they can influence things within the home and that they are involved in their own care plans enhancing their sense of control over their placement. Staff involve children's families and social workers in meetings and provide regular and detailed feedback on children's progress and of any issue in their life. Children confirm that staff take account of their individual differences and preferences when working with them.

Staff have worked through some very challenging behaviour with children, one social worker saying that staff show 'great perseverance and patience with extremely difficult behaviours'. Children were maintained in placement and completed educational programmes successfully despite extreme behaviours which staff addressed appropriately. A social worker stated that staff had put up with extreme behaviours from one child who would otherwise have had to be placed in a secure unit but was now achieving significant success.

The younger children, in particular, respond very well to the structure of the home which is evident from their progress and reduction in restraints and sanctions. Children confirm that sanctions are fair and linked to what they have done and plans to record all sanctions in one place will aid the Registered Managers analysis of them. Staff have an excellent rapport with the children and provide a wide range of age appropriate activities for them aiding in developing their confidence and social skills. Children benefit from positive engagement in the local community through clubs and activities facilitated by staff. Staff provide a wide range of exceptionally innovative activities for older children, such as a holiday programme with Charlton

football club designed to enhance their self-esteem, provide fun and a qualification in coaching.

Relatives of children say that they are made to feel very welcome at the home and children confirm they are helped to maintain or develop contact with their families and friends helping them to develop an understanding of their background and maintain links with their communities.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Children are happy and relaxed in the home and present as trusting of staff. They are appropriately protected by a range of safeguarding measures including systems to recruit appropriate staff, to deal with child protection issues or complaints, by contact with people independent of the home and comprehensive training of staff in safeguarding of children.

Children rarely go missing from the home and staff are aware of what action to take to comply with police protocols and in relation to each child's individual risks. Not all written risk assessments are current although staff were clear what action to take ensuring children were not at risk from this gap in recording.

Children are encouraged to negotiate with staff and to structure their time productively to give them control and to diminish situations of conflict. Staff constantly talk to children getting them to reflect on situations and to accept appropriate boundaries but sometimes use physical interventions to contain dangerous situations. There are very few restraints but the recording of these interventions is variable in quality and is sometimes unclear about what techniques were used to de-escalate the situation and the duration of this. The use of restraint is rare and appropriate techniques are employed by staff to ensure children are safely held and post event analysis of incidents allows staff to learn how to improve interventions to aid children to control their behaviour.

No new members of staff have been employed at the home since the last inspection but all staff employed have undergone appropriate checks, recruitment processes and probationary periods designed to protect children from unsuitable adults working in the home. Children's safety in the home is ensured by the regular testing of electrical and fire equipment. Health and safety guidelines are followed, risk assessments are comprehensive and all children and staff have taken part in the regular fire drills.

Leadership and management

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

Children live in a well managed home and enjoy care provided in line with its Statement of Purpose and Function. Staffing levels are good with comprehensive

training and appraisal used to improve the service to children. Supervision is generally regular and of high quality but some staff were not receiving this. However, their regular access to managers reduces the negative affect of this ensuring children remain well cared for. Staff said they enjoy working in the home but felt their performance would be improved by receiving rotas earlier than at present.

All staff are aware of recent changes in legislation and arrangements are in place to allow unqualified staff to undertake the level 3 Children and Young People's Workforce Diploma. The recommendation from the previous inspection has been completed allowing for improved analysis of restraints and sanctions improving safety and care for children.

Children benefit from the Registered Manager's excellent understanding of the home's strengths and weaknesses clearly identifying progress in the children and service developments to improve outcomes for them. The Registered Manager uses monitoring information from Regulation 33 visits and his own Regulation 34 monitoring to constantly improve the service to children which will be enhanced by planned improvements to these and the development plan.

Children's records are very clear, comprehensive and evidence their involvement in constructing their care and placement plans. This therefore enhances their engagement and understanding of these plans. All records are securely stored in a locked cabinet or in encrypted files to protect children's confidentiality.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.