

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Stephen Smith
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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

This privately run children's home is registered to care for up to four young people, of either sex, aged from 11 to 17 years old. It is registered to care for young people whose primary needs arise from emotional or behavioural difficulties.

Overall effectiveness

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

This is a well managed home with an experienced staff team that produces good outcomes for young people. The home understands its strengths and admits only those young people it considers it can help and will be suitable match for the young people already living there.

The care provided is individualised based on a good understanding of each young person's needs. Behaviour management is proactive and positive. The use of sanctions is infrequent and physical intervention is rare. As a consequence relationships between young people and staff are good. Some records do not include the information required in the revised regulations and some do not demonstrate that the effectiveness of sanctions is monitored robustly. The quality of care is satisfactory although some information and elements of young people's care planning does not set out the action needed to meet individual needs fully. The environment provided is positive and conducive to the care of young people. Health and safety matters are managed well, minimising the risks to young people and promoting their safety. Young people are enabled to have their say about the running of the home, their care and their plans for the future. Monitoring of the home is good. It ensures that strengths are highlighted and any shortfalls or areas for improvement are identified and acted upon.

Areas for improvementStatutory Requirements

This section sets out the actions which must be taken so that the registered person/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Reg.	Requirement	Due date
17B (2001)	ensure that records of control, discipline or restraint include a description of any injuries received to the child or any other person. Also confirmation that the person authorised by the registered provider to make the record has spoken to the child concerned and the person using the measure about the use of	26/08/2011

	the measure (Regulations 17B (3) (g) (h))	
17B (2001)	ensure that sanctions records contain a full evaluation of the effectiveness and consequences of the use of the measure. (Regulations 17B(3) (f))	26/08/2011

Recommendations

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

- ensure that the children's guide contains information about how a child can contact their Independent Reviewing Officer and the Children's Rights Director (NMS 13.5)
- ensure that children receive personalised care that promotes all aspects of their individual identity. Specifically, that care provided is effectively planned and evaluated (NMS 2.1)
- ensure that staff are clear about where consent for medical treatment needs to be obtained. Specifically, that consent from people with parental responsibility for the administration of over the counter medication identifies each medication that may be given (NMS 6.5)
- ensure that attention to children's gender, faith, ethnic origin, cultural and linguistic background, sexual orientation and disability is central to every aspect of care. Specifically, that plans identify any needs in this area more fully. (Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 5 paragraph 2.35)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people benefit from living in a home that helps them achieve positive outcomes in their lives. Young people receive good support to help them come to terms with their background and the things that have happened to them. They have good relationships with staff members and these help them develop a greater emotional resilience which will help them in their future lives.

Young people have access to all necessary primary health services they may need and the home provides them with good support and encouragement to attend any appointment necessary. Young people also receive any specialist health services that they are identified as needing. Staff at the home try hard to ensure that young people have healthy lifestyles and diets. Young people receive any medicine they need to maintain their health.

Young people living at the home benefit from good support for their education. The home places a priority on young people attending school consistently and works hard

to ensure that this happens. Where young people have difficulties at school or with their attendance the home is sensitive to this. It takes action to resolve the situation, working effectively with placing authorities where necessary. For example, the home worked hard to secure a move for one young person to a different school and has worked hard to support attendance and achievement through some subsequent difficulties. Staff members at the home support young people's achievement at school by attending events. This helps build young people's confidence and sense of worth. When young people have left school the home continues to work with them to help them gain good opportunities in terms of work or further training.

The home provides young people with any support for contact that is identified as necessary in line with the placing authority's plan for the young person. Contact arrangements are clearly recorded and agreed upon admission. Young people's views on their contact with family, friends and others important to them are listened to and acted upon. Staff encourage young people to maintain contact and actively facilitate it. Where there are difficulties with contact, staff at the home work with young people to help them to overcome these. This enables young people to develop and strengthen relationships with family and others providing them with important networks and links into adulthood.

Young people receive good support to help them as they grow older and prepare to leave care and move onto adulthood or independent living. The home has a separate facility which is used to help prepare young people for independence. A young person can live here with a kitchen, bathroom and bedsit and develop greater independence whilst having access to full staff support if needed. Staff encourage and support young people to undertake basic household tasks such as cleaning, self-care skills and preparing meals. This helps young people to learn skills for later life.

Quality of care

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

Each young person has a comprehensive care plan in place that sets out their assessed needs. These plans are kept updated and begin to identify how these needs are to be met. However, currently they do not set out the action required to meet needs well enough. This means the home is not able to plan and monitor the effectiveness of its work with children as well as it could. Young people know the content of the care plans and are able to have their say about their care and the running of the home. They can have regular time with their key worker and are consulted regularly. Staff set reasonable and appropriate boundaries and expectations for young people. Staff have a positive approach and encourage young people to develop and progress in their social skills. Consequently, relationships between young people and staff are good.

There is good information available to young people about complaints. Two complaints have been made since the last inspection. One of these was from a young person and one from another party. Both of these were dealt with appropriately at an informal stage. Information about complaints in the young persons' guide about

making a complaint is clear. It contains information about how young people can contact Ofsted or an independent advocacy service. However, it does not inform young people that how they can contact their own Independent Reviewing Officer or the office of the Children's Rights Director as alternative routes for expressing their concerns.

Food planned and provided for young people is varied, balanced and healthy. Young people do not always choose to eat what is offered but staff do encourage a healthy balanced diet. Staff ensure that food is prepared in safe way that helps promote young people's health. Medication arrangements are generally satisfactory. However, the process of seeking consent from a person with parental responsibility for the administration of 'over the counter' medication for young people does not specify the medication that may be given. As a consequence it does not protect young people from the effects of any allergy they may have to a specific medication given. The home works with placing authorities and other professionals to seek any medical examination or treatment that young people may need.

The home provides young people with good support with their education. It works effectively with placing authorities and schools to ensure that young people receive the support they need and works hard to promote consistent and regular school attendance. Young people have access to a range of activities and leisure pursuits, which promote an active and healthy lifestyle. Staff encourage young people to engage in a range of activities to develop new interests, friends and to stay healthy and well.

Young people's cultural and religious needs are assessed, identified and planned for at a basic level. Care planning is individually relevant and focuses on any specific needs that a young person may have. However, plans do not assess any cultural needs young people may have, for example those related to a move of community or geographic area well enough. For this reason young people may experience feelings and needs that the home has not identified and is therefore unable to meet.

The home is domestic in nature, well decorated and furnished throughout. It provides an environment that is conducive to the positive care of young people. The house is a three-storied property with four bedrooms. Two bedrooms provide young people with en-suite toilet and bathing facilities and another is in a self-contained 'independence' unit. There is an additional shower room and toilet. Young people have a choice of having a bath or a shower. There is a lounge and kitchen dining room for the young people to use. There are two rooms providing office space for staff which allows the secure and confidential retention of young people's information. The home is in a residential area of a village. There is easy access to public transport, leisure and other facilities.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people feel safe at the home and they have no concerns. They are confident in the ability of staff to protect them. There have been no child protection concerns relating to the home or its staff since the last inspection. The home has an appropriate policy and procedure relating to safeguarding young people. Staff are trained in child protection and know what to do to help keep young people safe at the home. Young people have information about the unacceptable nature of bullying and what to do if they have concerns. However, relationships between young people are good and there is no bullying at present.

Generally there are few incidents of young people being missing from the home. More recently there has been a short period of time during which there were significantly more incidents. However, this is largely attributable to the specific situation of one young person and demonstrates the home's good practice in managing such incidents. There is a clear procedure in place drawn up in line with local authority and police protocol best practices. Staff members work proactively to manage incidents of absence, search for young people and discuss matters honestly with them. Consequently, any risk to young people going missing is minimised.

Staff have a positive approach to behaviour management that is underpinned by the home's procedures. Young people are encouraged to develop socially acceptable behaviour through incentives, rewards and positive relationships with staff. Sanctions are used infrequently and are appropriate. There has been no use of physical intervention for some time, though staff are trained in its use so they can safely intervene if appropriate or necessary. Records are maintained of every incident of control, physical intervention or discipline. These records do not detail enough relevant information. The record books used do not contain a section to record any injuries received to the child or any other person. They also do not have a section to provide confirmation that the person authorised by the registered provider to make the record has spoken to the child concerned and the person using the measure about the incident. Additionally, sanctions records are not usually fully completed in terms of the evaluation of the outcome and effectiveness of the intervention used. As such the home's ability to monitor and learn from previous practice is diminished and this could limit the effectiveness of interventions on young people's behaviour.

Health and safety matters are managed well, which helps to keep young people safe. Maintenance is carried out on matters such as the gas boiler, fire equipment and fixed electrical wiring. Staff are trained in fire safety and fire drills take place regularly and include staff and young people so all know what to do to stay safe. Risk assessments take place of young people's likely and known activities. These are kept up to date and are known by staff to help them protect young people.

There have been no new staff recruited since the last inspection. The home has addressed a weakness in recruitment checks that was identified at the last inspection.

Leadership and management

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

The home has a Statement of Purpose that accurately sets out the aims, objectives and services of the home. Information in this statement is provided in a more accessible manner for young people in the children's guide. Young people's records are accurate, kept up to date and provide information that will help a young person understand their care.

There are sufficient staff on duty at all times to care for the young people. Staff members are experienced, qualified and have undertaken recently updated training in key matters. Staff supervision and management is effective and this supports staff to deliver a good level of safe care to young people.

External monitoring of the home is robust, covers all the key areas and reports upon the home's strengths and areas for attention. Actions for the home to undertake are identified at these visits and monitored at the next visit to ensure they have been undertaken. These visits include consultation with staff, young people and their families and social workers as appropriate.

The home has addressed the statutory requirements and recommendations made at the last inspection. The provider and manager operate the home in an effective manner for the well-being of the young people accommodated. A realistic development plan is in place for the home which recognises its strengths.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.