

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Sonya Robinson
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This private children's home provides residential care and accommodation for young people who may have emotional and behavioural difficulties. This home is registered for one young person.

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 **adequate**.

The home adopts a positive approach to meet the needs of the young people. However, the young people placed are currently reluctant to engage with the help on offer.

Staff have good knowledge of the young people they are working with, ensuring that their needs are adequately met. The home values the rights of individuals to respect and dignity.

Young people said that they are able to make their views known and have a say in what happens in the home. They are involved in decisions about what food they eat, what they do in their spare time and about the plans for their future. Young people said that they like the home, they feel safe and are confident to talk to an adult if they need to.

Social Workers who have placed young people within the home are positive about the care that their young person has received. They say that 'overall, they have done quite a good job'. Young people generally enjoy positive relationships with staff and confirm that staff are helpful.

The Registered Manager understands the strengths and weaknesses of the home and has a development plan in place which identifies action to be taken to raise standards. For example, there is a plan to improve the performance management of staff.

As a result of this inspection, issues raised include insufficient detail in the young person's guide and the Statement of Purpose; lack of consistency about young people in key-work reports; the development and implementation of young people's plans for their future transition and ensuring that all staff have an appropriate qualification in childcare.

Areas for improvement

Statutory 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
5 (2001)	update and revise the Statement of Purpose and the children's guide. (Regulation 5)	04/09/2012

Recommendations

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

- ensure that all children communicate their views on all aspects of their care and support, for example through detailed key work sessions (NMS 1.3)
- ensure that the home contributes to the development of and implementation of young people's pathway plans and in particular, ensure that plans are available and clearly outline young people's goals (NMS 12.2)
- ensure that all existing care staff have attained a minimum level 3 qualification (the Children and Young People's Workforce Diploma). (NMS 18.5)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people are encouraged to eat healthy and nutritious meals that they help to plan, taking into account their likes and dislikes. Young people are encouraged to assist, with some success, with preparing meals. Young people also go shopping with staff. This helps them to learn about budgeting skills, in preparation for adulthood.

Young people have health care plans which enable their health needs to be assessed, monitored and appropriate action taken. Staff actively encourage young people to enjoy and participate in healthy activities and experiences. Young people have recently become reluctant to attend routine health appointments, despite staff's best

efforts and encouragement.

Young people who are placed in this service access the organisation's school as part of their care package. Young people have recently become disengaged with the home and the school and so their attendance has been increasingly sporadic. Young people do have up-to-date educational plans in place. The staff ensure that resources, such as computers, are available to aid learning and so that young people can learn and sustain contact with friends and family. Young people are supported to develop a sense of self-worth and self-direction in relation to the choices and challenges they face.

Young people are encouraged to take part in a range of leisure activities. They have opportunities to develop confidence in their skills and enjoy their leisure time. Young people choose to play on games consoles and spend time in their room, though recently young people have enjoyed dog-walking with a member of staff. Young people have also been on holiday since the last inspection and spoke eagerly about this. They also enjoy celebrating Christian festivals such as Christmas and Easter with staff.

Young people maintain regular contact with families and friends. This includes staying overnight in nearby hotels, supported by staff where appropriate. This helps young people to see their families regularly and to help them maintain relationships that are important to them. Staff make sure that the arrangements for contact promote and safeguard young people's welfare. Staff achieve this by working closely with families to ensure that contact is a positive experience for young people.

Due to their changing needs, young people are ready to move on to more appropriate placements. They are supported to develop independence skills to prepare them for adulthood, but are reluctant to engage with staff on a regular basis. This may be because there are no pathway plans in place; for example, there are no plans available in the home that clearly outline the young people's goals.

Quality of care

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

The consultation systems with young people are adequate. There are discussions between staff and young people along with formal fortnightly sessions with key staff. These key work sessions cover good practice principles such as being healthy, staying safe and making a positive contribution. However, records maintained are very brief at times and therefore provide inconsistent information about young people and the support they are offered.

Young people are helped to develop socially acceptable behaviour by the use of praise and the implementation of boundaries. Young people know what standards of behaviour are expected and this has resulted in young people demonstrating an increasingly mature and responsible approach to how they conduct themselves. Staff ensure that young people have access to information about how to make a

complaint, such as that in the children's guide. They say that they would talk to staff if they had any worries or concerns.

Staff have a sound understanding of young people's needs. They also ensure that young people have access to suitable advice and support when young people are feeling unwell or if they are concerned about young people's emotional wellbeing. Staff support young people to be active and take regular exercise. Young people say that exercise is not something that interests them. Staff have been creative in their approach and by agreement, one member of staff brings a dog to visit the home on a regular basis to encourage the young people to exercise.

The home's procedures for managing medication are put into practice to ensure that young people's welfare is promoted. All staff are trained in first aid and handling medication. This means that they have an understanding of the home's procedures and a knowledge of young people's specific medication needs.

Staff take young people's education seriously. Staff support and encourage young people to learn and study, by promoting a positive routine. Young people know that they are expected to attend education. Staff are working with relevant authorities to ensure that young people's educational needs are reviewed and secured for the next academic year.

Staff care for young people in line with their local authority care plan and the home liaises when appropriate with parents to promote continuity of care. The home is working with placing authorities regarding plans and possible future placements for the young people. Young people are encouraged to engage in activities, such as having meals out with befrienders on a weekly basis. This is to enable young people to build confidence and experience different social and cultural backgrounds.

Young people live in a homely environment that meets their needs. They like the accommodation and have personalised their bedrooms to reflect their interests and individual tastes. The house is appropriately decorated and furnished. The front and rear garden areas are maintained and are available for young people's relaxation and enjoyment.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people say they feel safe and are protected from harm. Staff are trained in safeguarding. They work effectively with young people and the safeguarding agencies, including the police, to promote young people's safety. Since the last inspection, there have been no incidents of young people going missing from care. Young people are also free from bullying within the home. They have positive relationships with staff and generally behave appropriately.

Young people's physical aggression has greatly diminished during their time in the home and as a consequence physical intervention and sanctions are not regular

occurrences. Staff have developed an understanding of the times and factors that contribute to young people becoming upset. Staff use behaviour management strategies specific to the needs of individual young people. Young people are benefiting from a consistent and structured environment where they clearly know what is expected of them. This approach has been effective in helping young people to feel safe, emotionally secure and to reduce their anxieties. Staff have enabled young people to understand their feelings and work out ways to manage their behaviour constructively; for example, by attending anger management therapy.

Young people live in a physically safe environment. They are protected from hazards by health and safety procedures. 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. The recruitment and selection of people working at the home is thorough to make sure young people are protected. Also there are suitable systems in place to ensure that visitors to the home are appropriately checked and supervised to protect young people.

Leadership and management

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

The home is managed by an experienced and qualified Registered Manager. This Registered Manager also manages another two children's homes owned by the organisation. One is currently rated as adequate and the other is rated as good. This means that Registered Manager has day-to-day responsibility for managing three services, which are all single placement services. The impact of current arrangements is being monitored by Ofsted. However, in this home the manager is exercising competent and effective leadership.

At the last inspection in March 2012, three requirements and five recommendations were made. The requirements were in relation to records regarding physical intervention and sanctions and the monitoring of these. Since the last inspection, the detail has been noted and the Registered Manager monitors these on a monthly basis.

The recommendations included the need to better support young people who are placed some distance from home, through appropriate contact arrangements. Since the last inspection, contact arrangements have been reviewed and increased in support of young people's needs. However, there are still issues for some young people about their distance from home. This is being reviewed by the relevant professionals involved in their care.

Other recommendations included the need to maintain detailed records of healthcare appointments; ensuring that when the Regulation 33 visitor raises issues, that these are actioned; the need for lone working risk assessments and the need to maintain records of the Registered Manager's supervision at the home. All of these recommendations have been fully addressed.

The organisation has an adequate business plan in place. This includes an improvement agenda which identifies the strengths and weaknesses of the home. The home is monitored by a representative of the organisation. This provides young people and staff with an opportunity to discuss any issues they may have about living or working at the home. In addition, the Registered Manager monitors systems at the home to ensure that the needs of young people are met. The home has a positive relationship with neighbours and the local community.

The home has a Statement of Purpose which sets out its aims and how it will operate. Young people are also given a young person's guide on their arrival to the home. Both of these documents have minor omissions; for example 'unauthorised absence' is referred to, as opposed to 'missing from care'. Within the young people's guide, there are no contact details for children's rights workers.

Staff say that they are supported by the Registered Manager and that they have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities. They confirm that when they need support and guidance, the Registered Manager is helpful. They are also receiving formal one-to-one supervision. This monitors their performance, accountability and identifies their individual development needs. Team meetings take place regularly every month to allow the staff team to discuss the young people, the running of the home, and look at ways to improve the service they offer.

Young people are looked after by a staff team who have a range of skills and experience. The staff team provides both positive male and female role models. The number of staff on duty meets the needs of young people.

Staff have access to a rolling programme of good quality training. Staff say that since the last inspection, they have undertaken a number of training courses; for example, they have attended training on developing good practice, managing challenging behaviour, independence training and sexual exploitation, all of which have helped to inform their practice. However, not all staff have an appropriate level 3 qualification in childcare. Additionally, some elements of the quality of recording were seen to be variable. For example, some key work session recording was lacking in detail.

Overall, the home's written records provide satisfactory information about individual young people's needs, development and progress. There are also systems in place to notify Ofsted of any significant issues that may occur within the home or with regards to the young people placed. This ensures that there are adequate systems in place to promote the welfare of the young people.

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.