

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	24/08/2012
Inspector	Wendy Anderson
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Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	20/03/2012
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home is registered to accommodate up to five children or young people. The Statement of Purpose specifies an age range of eight to 17 years. The children or young people may have complex needs including emotional and behavioural difficulties. The provider is an organisation and a limited company, with a number of children's homes.

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 **good**.

Young people make good progress in relation to their starting point at the home in all aspects of their life. For some these are small improvements due to the length of time they have been placed at the home. This can be evidenced by looking at the previous plans and goals for the young people over the time that they have been at the home. Care planning is individualised and regularly reviewed and updated. Staff in the home demonstrate a good understanding of the needs of the young people placed as well as of the organisation's policies and procedures. This ensures the young people develop in a safe environment where boundaries and practice is consistent.

Young people are happy at the home and like the staff who care for them. The staff team's relationships with external professionals ranges from good to adequate.

Staff have a good understanding of the needs of the young people they care for. The staff are consistent at addressing issues with young people. They are supportive of each other and the manager provides effective leadership. Leadership at the home is good and the manager is aware and understands the areas which require further development. These include ensuring that: some minor inconsistencies within the recording systems are addressed; staff receive supervision in line with the organisation's policies; and where the home has to notify the relevant authorities of events they need to ensure that all information regarding any incidents is attached to the notification. In addition, where young people have supervised contact, additional

clarity regarding expectations of all parties concerned could be clearer to avoid confusion.

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
27 (2001)	ensure staff receive appropriate supervision. In particular, this needs to be in line with the organisation's policy on staff supervision (Regulation 27(4 (a)))	30/11/2012
17B (2001)	ensure that within 24 hours of the use of any measure of control, restraint or discipline in a children's home, a record is made in a volume kept for this purpose. In particular, that there is continuity between records of incidents and those for restraints. In particular, that all records are complete (Regulation 17B (3)).	30/11/2012
24 (2001)	ensure that a written record is made of any complaint, the action taken in response and the outcome of the investigation. In particular, this needs to include whether the complainant is satisfied with the outcome of the investigation or not.(Regulation 24(5))	30/11/2012

Recommendations

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

- ensure a system is in place to notify within 24 hours the persons and appropriate authorities of the occurrences of significant events in accordance with Regulation 30, Schedule 5. In particular, that the home ensures full details of the events are included in the report (NMS 24.1)
- ensure ongoing restrictions on communication by the child is agreed by the child's responsible authority. In particular, expectation around supervised contact is clearly stated in the child's placement and care plan. (NMS 9.4)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people make adequate to good progress whilst accommodated at the home.

This includes building self-confidence, self-awareness and understanding of their background and education. This can be evidenced by looking at the progress they have made in their set goals and also by recent exam achievements.

Young people are encouraged by the staff team to lead a healthy lifestyle. Young people are fully involved in the menu planning and also, where possible, in the preparation of meals which are varied and well balanced. Young people enjoy good health and attend all required medical appointments. The range of activities also enables young people to maintain a healthy lifestyle. The staff work with the young people to identify their individual interests and then pursue these.

Where young people exhibit unsafe behaviour, staff work with them to reduce this. This happens through the keyworker sessions where staff will talk through situations to enable the young people to understand the risks they are placing themselves in. Although some young people still engage in these behaviours, some have dramatically reduced these.

Staff enable young people to maintain contact with their families and friends. Information on any contact restrictions and supervised contact is contained within individual plans. However, one plan lacked clarity between the home and the placing authority; this could lead to confusion.

Young people are enabled at an age-appropriate level to work on their independence skills to prepare them for independence. However, due to the ages of the young people placed, this work is currently not needed.

Young people are encouraged to make friends in the local community and friends are made to feel welcome by the staff team.

Quality of care

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

Young people said they feel safe at the home and they are happy there. They have good relationships with the staff who care for them and feel staff look after them well. Staff at the home focus on the needs of each young person and demonstrate a good understanding of the needs of the individuals they care for. This knowledge is supported by good individual plans which include input from the young people. This includes information of their day-to-day care, vulnerabilities, triggers and any strategies to reduce inappropriate behaviours. The goal of these plans is also to enable the young people to manage their own behaviours. All plans are regularly reviewed and updated in light of young people's development and/or behaviours. The manager said that there can be omissions and delays in getting all the Looked After Children information from social workers especially if a young person is placed at short notice. In such situations an interim care plan is received until all documentation is obtained. This was evident in the young person's files. There have been incidents where there has been a lack of clarity in the information /agreements between the home and the placing authorities. This has meant that levels of

communication and supervision of young people have been felt not to be what was agreed/expected. New systems have been devised and implemented to ensure that this does not happen in the future.

Young people have at least one identified key worker who mainly coordinates the young person's care. The young people are supposed to have regular key worker sessions, at least on a weekly basis as outlined by the organisation's policy. These sessions look at the reasons why the young person came into care, their behaviour, any relevant incidents and progression made by the young people. These sessions also look at issues of culture and personal identity to help the young people develop their understanding of self and increase their self-worth and confidence. Currently these sessions are not consistently taking place as often as stated in the organisation's policy and the quality of these records varies from good to adequate.

Overall, however, consultation with young people at the home is good and various methods are used to ensure this takes place which include house meetings, meal times, Regulation 33 visits as well as key worker sessions. This enables the young people to be involved in all aspects of their care and the day to day running of the home. It also helps to develop social skills, such as negotiation and an understanding that not everything they request is possible.

Young people are made aware of how to raise a complaint at the home through information on notice boards and the young person guide. There have been two complaints since the last full inspection, one of which was from a young person. These have both been resolved; however, the complaint record does lack clarity in relation to the complainant's views of the outcome.

Staff promote education with the young people and there is clear evidence of young people making good progress from their starting point; some young people are taking GCSEs and achieving fairly good results. The home has recently registered its own school with the Department of Education. Each young person has an individual education plan which is regularly reviewed and updated.

Young people are able to engage in a wide range of activities both in the home and the local community. Wherever a young person has a particular interest the staff strive to enable the young person to pursue this. This includes accessing local clubs and sports facilities. The choice of activities for the week is decided at the young person's house meetings.

Health care at the home is good and includes educating young people to have a healthy lifestyle. Young people attend all the required health appointments and also have access to both in-house as well as external professionals for additional support where a need has identified. Young people also undergo a period of assessment upon admission to ensure they receive the help they require to meet their physical, emotional and psychological needs. Comprehensive records of health care issues are maintained and staff receive regular training on health-related topics.

Accommodation at the home ranges from a good to adequate standard. The home

has recently experienced some considerable damage from a young person who has now moved. A number of repairs have taken place, which have led to the communal areas and especially the kitchen being very well equipped and decorated to a good homely standard. One of the young people's bedrooms is well furnished and decorated. The other two are in need of decoration and repair/replacement of some furniture. This has been ordered and will shortly be delivered. The home has a welcoming, friendly atmosphere and the young people said they enjoy living there.

Communication between the home and fellow professionals varies. Some professionals stated that the home provided 'first rate care and guidance' and enabled young people to develop their independence and 'self-care skills in an age appropriate way'. They also said that young people have grown in confidence, maturity and independence since they have been in placement. Other professionals said that they felt communication between the home and themselves could be improved as could the level of supervision of young people. The home has amended its practice to address these points.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people feel safe at the home and could identify a number of staff they felt able to talk to. They said that the staff are approachable and friendly. Young people said that bullying at the home was not an issue and said if the staff saw or heard of any they would quickly sort it out. Evidence seen during the inspection supported this view.

The home has robust policies and procedure to safeguard the well-being of young people placed and staff demonstrate a good working knowledge of these, which is supported by regular updates to their training. The process of identifying the needs and vulnerabilities of the individual through individual plans and risk assessments enables the staff to keep the young people safe. These plans, which are regularly reviewed and updated, include triggers and strategies for identifying and addressing individual needs. Young people are fully involved in these plans so that they understand their behaviours, their impact on others and the work on improving these. Staff demonstrated a clear understanding of individual's plans

The home uses restraint as a last resort and all staff are trained in the provider's chosen method. The mainstay of this training is identification of triggers and the development of strategies to diffuse situations. Young people are made aware of the consequences that may result through their actions and sanctions are clearly recorded by staff. Since the last inspection there has only been one restraint. However, this record was not complete as one page was missing. Records of incidents are appropriate and there is evidence of lessons learnt from incidents being used to improve the home's practice.

The home has clear policies and procedures for dealing with young people who go missing from the home, which are in line with local authority and police policies.

Young people have individual plans in place which are in line with their level of vulnerability. There is evidence of work on this issue with the young people which has led to a reduction in young people being absent without authority.

The organisation has a robust recruitment and vetting procedure which is applied in practice, helping to prevent unsuitable persons from having the opportunity to harm young people.

Fire policies and procedures are in place and adhered to. This process is supported by robust risk assessments and health and safety policies and procedures. This process ensures the environment is a safe place for the young people to reside.

Leadership and management

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

There were no requirements set at the last inspection. The two recommendations made at that time have now been met. The home has a Statement of Purpose which reflects the current work the home is undertaking. Regulation 33 and 34 visits and reports take place at the required intervals and cover all required aspects. Both reports reflect the involvement of young people. There is also a clear monitoring system in place which enables the manager to identify any shortfalls. Young people's files and information are well organised and stored securely.

The staff team is appropriate to meet the needs of the young people who are placed at the home. The team is currently three members of staff short due to various reasons. These gaps are being covered by sessional workers who are employed by the organisation and some agency staff. Although the home strives to use the same people to provide consistency for the young people, this is not always possible. The remainder of the staff team has been in post for some time and they provide stability as newer staff work with them. The home's staff rotas provide evidence of this. The current manager of the home is undergoing the registration process with Ofsted. Staff are qualified for the work they undertake. However, training has recently been through an erratic period where staff were not always receiving the updates they require. This has now been resolved. The training matrix now identifies what training the staff have undertaken and when refresher training is due.

Staff are positive about their colleagues, including the manager, and said they receive a lot of support from each other. They said the manager is approachable and supportive. The organisation states that formal staff supervision should take place on a monthly basis. This is not happening consistently. However, staff do all receive an annual appraisal which identifies any training or developmental needs. The organisation has recently revised its appraisal system. Now staff receive an annual appraisal and development session and then a six-monthly review of this. This is a two-way process and is comprehensive. Staff meetings are held on a regular basis and all staff are encouraged to put forward items for the agenda. Staff said they feel comfortable putting forward their ideas in these meetings.

The home makes the required notification to the required bodies. However, where these state 'see attachment' these do not consistently have this attachment. This leads to incomplete information being received.

The home has an appropriate development plan in place. This plan also includes information gathered from the monitoring systems that the manager has in place.

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.