

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	28/10/2013
Inspector	Tola Akinde-Hummel
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	19/03/2013
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This is one of two privately owned children's homes in the area operated by the same provider. It provides accommodation and support to four young people of either sex, aged between 11 and 18 years old. The home is registered to care for young people with emotional or behavioural difficulties and young people with a mild mental disorder.

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**.

The home is good at providing a warm and caring environment for young people. Staff provide consistent levels of support to young people with complex and varying needs. The home does not often have long term placements so are limited in the amount of progress they make with young people. Staff care about young people and make efforts to meet their needs even for the short time that they live in the home. One young person said, 'I know how the home are supposed to help me and they do that. I am accepting their help.'

The staff quickly access resources that will be of benefit to the young people, especially in the area of education and health.

The staff understand their role in safeguarding young people and work effectively with partner agencies. Regular training and workshops ensure that staff are aware of the changes taking place in the field of social care and education.

Staff feel well supported by the Registered Manager and the team manager who are very 'hands on' and approachable. Staff share the manager's vision to make improvements that will have a direct impact to enhance young people's care.

The manager provides monitoring reports too frequently to Ofsted to fully evaluate how well the service is supporting young people. However, these only need to be supplied every six months.

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
34 (2001)	establish and maintain a system for monitoring the matters set out in schedule 6 at appropriate intervals and supply to the HMCI a report in respect of any review conducted. (Regulation 34 1 (a), (2))	30/12/2013

Recommendations

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

- ensure that information about the child is recorded clearly and in a way which will be helpful to the child when they access their files now or in the future. (NMS 22.5).

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **adequate**.

Young people live in an environment where they begin to take positive steps to improve their lives.

Young people are supported to attend school or apprenticeships. For some young people, this is a significant improvement from their previous patterns of non - attendance and disruptive behaviour in educational establishments.

Young people take advantage of leisure facilities in the local area and enjoy positive contact with their friends and relatives who are warmly welcomed into the home. This encourages young people to be more relaxed about informing staff where they are going and when they will return. This reduces the incidence of them going absent and missing.

Young people have some understanding of their situation and have made positive changes to address any anti- social and criminal behaviour. While living in the home, incidents of offending behaviour have significantly reduced.

Young people have good relationships with staff and use this to their advantage to seek advice and support about issues such as parenting and racism. Young people express their thoughts and feelings so they are better able to receive helpful guidance on how to make sense of these.

Young people improve their independent living skills such as personal presentation, cleaning, budgeting, and making and attending health appointments.

Quality of care

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

The staff show respect to each other and the young people. Very quickly following placement, young people learn that this is the standard set for everybody in the home. Young people learn how to manage living with others and be considerate of other people's feelings. Staff use their knowledge and experience to comfortably embrace differences between young people and to celebrate their individuality; for example, young people are challenged about gender inequalities in a non-threatening way, using examples that they will understand.

Staff undertake careful matching of young people referred to them to give them the best opportunity to grow in confidence and make wise decisions about their lives by the time they leave. The home ensures that there is a period of settling in for each newly admitted young person before introducing another young person into the home. This helps young people to establish relationships with staff that they feel secure about.

The home ensures that young people are allocated a key worker. Their role is to address the young people's immediate needs as identified in the initial referral through to the individualised care plan produced by the home. This includes young people's access to primary and specialist health care and suitable education or training. One young person said, 'The home are really helping me to get onto an apprenticeship course that I am interested in.'

The induction and care plan records detail the first month of placement tasks to ensure young people's needs are addressed. All staff play a role in the implementation and monitoring of the plan thereafter. The allocation of key workers is in accordance with young people's presenting needs and their interests. This ensures that the most appropriate member of staff is identified to work with each young person. Young people approach any member of staff for assistance and all staff work with all young people. These arrangements allow young people to build good rapport with all staff and they do not have to wait for individual staff to be on shift to receive support.

Staff provide young people with a variety of ways to make their feelings known about the home. They use residents meetings, consultation documents and the complaints procedure to assess how well they are meeting young people's needs and requests. The home has implemented an additional check to measure how long it

takes them to address young people's requests. This is to ensure there is no drift in decision making and implementation. To date, no complaints have been made since the last inspection, although young people have enquired about the progress of the purchase of a new television for their bedrooms.

Staff ensure that young people have a choice of activities that they can participate in. Staff use information provided by young people, their family and professionals to offer relevant choices. Staff also engage young people in activities within the home such as educational board games, topical discussions and computer-based entertainment. Young people participate in annual holidays following a six month period in the home. They engage in events particular to their culture and religion such as attendance at places of worship and participating in culturally appropriate activities. This ensures young people have a good range of experiences through which they can develop.

The home is large and well maintained. It is comfortable and spacious enabling young people to make use of communal areas where they can cook and eat together, and socialise with friends and family. Bedrooms are well decorated and personalised according to young people's preferences.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Staff encourage young people to behave in a socially acceptable manner. They do this by building a rapport with them and gently correcting them with explanations as to why particular behaviour is unacceptable. The home has not used any sanctions or restraints since the last inspection. The minimal number of incidents show that this method of managing behaviour is very effective. The home uses rewards and positive reinforcement to help modify young people's behaviour and help them improve.

Young people report that they feel safe in the home. Staff understand their individual vulnerabilities and address these with the aid of comprehensive, individualised risk assessments. Action plans produced by the home establish how staff can minimise known risks. Staff impart advice to young people about how they can keep themselves safe outside the home.

Young people who have a history of absconding have reduced the time they spend away since moving into the home. They know what action the staff will take if they are absent or missing. Staff have good relationships with a variety of professionals and have in the past initiated disruption and strategy meetings to address identified safeguarding issues. This has strengthened the focus of care and support provided by all relevant parties around the young person. One social worker said, 'The staff managed this very vulnerable young person appropriately and followed all the correct procedures.'

The home continues to build good relationships with professionals including

placement officers, the missing person's unit and the local safeguarding children's board. This means the home can access additional support for young people when they need it. One placement officer said, 'They do what they do well. We have not seen any destructive behaviour during this placement.'

The recruitment of staff is robust. The process includes group and individual interviews as well as taking-up references and additional employment checks. This ensures that staff working with young people are suitable.

Regular health and safety checks and fire drills are carried out periodically to ensure that young people's safety is not compromised.

Leadership and management

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

The home is led by a Registered Manager who is proactive and motivated to improve the service provided to young people. The home has a Statement of Purpose which reflects the service provided to young people. The young person's guide has recently been amended and sets out clearly what young people can expect from the home; it is written in a style that is easily accessible to young people using the service.

Recommendations made at the previous inspection have been met. The home has improved the fire risk assessment to ensure that there is sufficient detail about how risk will be minimised.

Staff are sufficiently trained to carry out their role. The majority of staff hold professional qualifications in a variety of disciplines including social work, nursing and education. This enables the home to draw on the expertise and current thinking in these professions to benefit staff practice and the delivery of support to young people.

Young people benefit from a stable staff team who are well supported. Staff team meetings take place regularly and provide the environment for staff to discuss the care and support they provide. Meetings always include a separate learning workshop; this is often led by staff on particular subjects for example sexual exploitation, emotional intelligence and dealing with diversity and difference. Feedback from such sessions is positive and gives staff the opportunity to refocus on particular areas of their work. This is followed up in supervision where staff use the time to talk about their work with young people and their professional development. The staff team are positive about the support they are provided with to manage their role and many have worked for the home for over ten years. One member of staff said, 'We know we cannot afford to get too comfortable with the way we do things and have always done things, that is why the workshops are there to challenge us.'

The home demonstrates capacity to improve. The Registered Manager, along with the home's consultant and team manager, have a development plan in place. The focus of this plan is to revisit all aspects of the homes operations to identify where

improvements can be made. As staff have worked in the home for a number of years, the team have agreed to revisit their induction. In addition, staff members are tasked with specific jobs such as reviewing policies and procedures and completing an overview of the home's paperwork. This is to ensure they remain accurate and up-to-date. Additional workshops are being organised for the staff team to explore how they can record and measure outcomes for young people more effectively.

Staffing levels are good and meet the needs of the young people in the home; for example, young people are not prevented from accessing outdoor activities due to shortages of staff. Staff are flexible in their approach, for example, providing cover at short notice in an emergency.

Records kept in the home are detailed and legible; however these records are not always kept in an order that makes it easy to follow how decisions are made and what action has been taken. This does not affect the service received by young people but does not give a sufficiently clear picture of the process the home has undertaken should young people wish to access their records in the future.

The home produces monthly monitoring reports completed by the Registered Manager and sends them to Ofsted; however these are only required twice a year. By completing reports too frequently, the home is not able to critically evaluate progress and shortfalls over a long period of time. This means that significant learning opportunities, patterns and trends may be overlooked. This has not had a detrimental effect on young people's care.

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* and the evaluation schedule for the inspection of children's homes.