

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC010699
Inspector	Jackie Graves
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Registered manager	Dawnette Legister
Date of last inspection	05/12/2013

Inspection date	29/05/2014
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Previous inspection	inadequate progress
Enforcement action since last inspection	none

This inspection	
Overall effectiveness	adequate
Outcomes for children and young people	good
Quality of care	good
Keeping children and young people safe	adequate
Leadership and management	adequate

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	adequate
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There are relaxed, friendly relationships between young people and staff. Young people remain in touch with the staff when they move on, with some coming back to visit or stay for a meal. This helps young people remain connected to the home. A young person said, 'It's good here.' An independent visitor finds the home's approach to equality and diversity is a strength, with young people encouraged to do things suitable for their gender and culture and celebratory meals and occasions observed.

The home manages young people well, who may have highly criminal pasts and very challenging behaviour, helping them to improve their outcomes. Behaviour is managed in low-key ways. A manager finds a strength of the home is that: 'For each young person, staff have had a positive impact.'

Young people like their rooms and the building, most of which is decorated and furnished to a very high standard. They are encouraged to be healthy and to participate in varied activities.

The home has not fully met one requirement made at the last inspection relating to maintaining accurate duty rosters. There are shortfalls in relation to the home's Statement of Purpose, young people's records, staff recruitment, maintenance of a

few parts of the premises and garden and fire safety. Also, although the home has a Registered Manager, the home is currently run by two deputies. As the Registered Manager is not in day-to-day charge of the home, another person should be proposed to register as manager.

Full report

Information about this children's home

The home is owned by a private provider and is a family-run business. The Registered Manager is also the registered provider. The home provides care for five young people with emotional or behavioural difficulties. Emergency placements and short-term respite care may be provided.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
05/12/2013	Interim	inadequate progress
04/04/2013	Full	good
11/09/2012	Interim	satisfactory progress
22/05/2012	Full	good

What does the children's home need to do to improve further?

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
4 (2001)	include in the Statement of Purpose all the matters listed in Schedule 1, specifically the experience of staff and the age range of children for whom it is intended that accommodation is to be provided (Regulation 4 (1))	31/07/2014
5 (2001)	notify HMCI of any revision of the Statement of Purpose within 28 days (Regulation 5 (b))	14/06/2014
7 (2001)	ensure the registered provider appoints an individual to manage the home as the registered provider/Registered Manager is not in full time day-to-day charge of the home (Regulation 7 (1) (b))	31/07/2014

	(iii))	
28 (2001)	ensure that children's case records are kept up-to-date, with specific reference to completing risk assessments (Regulation 28 (1) (b))	30/06/2014
26 (2001)	demonstrate that a person is fit to work at a children's home by making available full and satisfactory information in relation to him in respect of each of the matters specified in Schedule 2, specifically two written references, including a reference from the person's most recent employer, if any (Regulation 26 (3) (d) Schedule 2 (3))	30/06/2014
29 (2001)	maintain the records specified in Schedule 4 including an accurate record of the staff duty roster (Regulation 29 (1) Schedule 4 (11))	14/06/2014
31 (2001)	ensure that all parts of the home are kept clean, reasonably decorated and maintained, with specific reference to: maintaining the laundry room and conservatory in a good, clean condition; replacing missing light bulbs in various rooms; ensuring there is a current gas installations safety certificate; and maintaining the garden and removing items stored for disposal there (Regulation 31 (2))	30/06/2014
32 (2001)	take adequate precautions against the risk of fire, specifically by ensuring that fire doors which should be kept closed are not wedged open. (Regulation 32 (1) (a)(b))	14/06/2014

Recommendations

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

- ensure that the record of recruitment includes, where possible, a statement from each referee as to their opinion of the person's suitability to work with children (NMS 16.3 (d))

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **good**

The potential for improving outcomes is somewhat hampered by the short-term nature of many placements. Nevertheless, young people's stay in the home is a positive experience.

Young people feel they are helped to settle quickly. For many, a very positive outcome of their stay is a return to live with their birth family or a move to live in a suitable foster placement after previous disruption in their lives with frequent placement breakdowns. It is impressive that no placements have been ended by the home since the last inspection, so young people are experiencing more stability in their lives.

Young people benefit from staying in touch with family when this is appropriate for them. Their friends are welcome to visit and they in turn visit friends and mix with others outside the home so they can maintain important relationships. Families are free to visit their children in the home where this is appropriate, so young people can meet their families in a natural, homely setting.

Young people like living in the home and value the trusting relationships they have with staff and managers. They feel they can relax in this environment and some say they 'feel happier' and are more emotionally secure as a result of their stay.

Young people's life skills improve. For example, they take responsibility for managing their own rooms, laundry, managing money and making some meals as part of their general participation in the life of the home. Others embark on more concentrated programmes to gain independence skills and a realistic understanding of what future services may be available to them, for example, semi-independent living. This helps to prepare them for their adult lives, for example, by learning the reality of living on a tight budget.

All young people benefit from being enrolled in college placements. For some, this is a considerably improved outcome after previously refusing any form of education before moving into the home. Attendance is variable for a minority. Some young people show absolute commitment to their studies and a desire to improve their qualifications and educational options, for example, with some considering university as a future goal. A few show interest in their chosen courses but struggle with punctuality and regular attendance. Some young people benefit from part-time employment which develops confidence and financial independence as well as improving their chances of future full-time employment. Others are involved in voluntary work or work experience to help them also optimise their prospects.

Most young people improve aspects of their behaviour which may put them at risk,

for example, there may be a reduction in incidents of criminal behaviour or adherence to bail conditions. Most young people take steps to improve their own safety, for example, by returning to the home when they are expected. A minority who do not return when expected, have nevertheless made progress in that they now remain in touch with staff, ask for help if it is needed and tell staff when they will be returning.

Young people enjoy good general health. They have an understanding of the importance of healthy lifestyles, particularly healthy eating and regular exercise and learn to take responsibility for their own health. The majority engage with all the health services they need so they can make informed decisions about whether to continue with choices which may impact on their health. A minority do not engage consistently with specialist health services, sometimes due to the short time they have lived in the home; nevertheless, they make some progress in accepting some of the health services which are offered and which may benefit them.

Quality of care

good

Staff are consistently concerned with young people's welfare and want them to do well and make progress while they are in the home. They help young people to raise their aspirations, aim for better outcomes and not accept limitations due to their looked after status. A social worker said the staff and manager are 'very proactive about helping young people change, make progress, go to college and change some risky behaviour' and is 'generally impressed with them'.

There is an open culture where young people's views are sought and acted upon. Staff listen to young people's views, for example, in residents' meetings and individual key work sessions. They make sure young people views are respected, for example, regarding their often sensitive decisions about continued contact with family members. A young person said it is 'wonderful' living at the home and 'staff are great, It's very good. Staff helpful'.

Young people are encouraged to raise any concerns or complaints and are reassured by the home's prompt response to investigating these thoroughly.

Staff are successful in identifying and respecting young people's needs relating to their culture and personal identity. For example, they make sure young people are able to worship and take part in special meals and celebrations.

The home engages well with professionals in order that young people can access services and get the help they need. Staff are persistent in encouraging young people to accept the health services which may be beneficial to them, for example, CAMHS. They recognise that young people need time to make progress in accepting some types of help, which many do not have due to the short-term nature of placements. Nevertheless, it is encouraging that young people trust the staff and will talk to them. Staff also work well with parents in order to bring about the best outcomes for young

people.

Arrangements for the administration of medication in the home are sound. Young people benefit from having a high number of staff trained in first aid who can provide any emergency treatment.

Keeping children and young people safe adequate

Young people feel safe in the home, get on well with each other and do not experience any bullying. They feel the staff are nurturing and care about their safety and welfare.

Staff use their training to help promote young people's safety. They take steps to ensure young people are safe when out and about, for example, by making sure they learn about the risks of gang culture and sexually risky behaviour. They advocate strongly for the young people in their care and will intervene to protect individuals, for example, by making sure others in the community are aware of their age and vulnerability. Although staff demonstrate a good understanding of the risks individual young people present to themselves and others, this does not translate into records, as one young person's file does not include any completed risk assessments.

Behaviour management is good, with an emphasis on staff taking a calm approach to any challenging behaviour and talking and listening to young people. The use of sanctions is very low, with only one since the last inspection. Any consequences to challenging behaviour are reasonable and fair, for example, reparation for damage caused. It is impressive that no incidents of restraint have taken place since the last inspection.

Incidents of young people going missing from this home are low, with only three incidents since the last inspection. Staff take appropriate action to make sure young people are aware of the risks to them when they are missing and are successful in reducing incidents over time.

The home's recruitment procedures are mostly robust, with DBS checks carried out and two references obtained. However, in one case, the second reference is general and not requested by the home, plus a reference is not obtained from the current employer to give up-to-date information on the employee's performance. In one case a referee was not asked if they have any concerns about the applicant working with young people, which would be an additional safeguard in ensuring the right people are employed to work in the home.

The home is mostly physically safe, for example, with portable appliance testing and a fire risk assessment carried out. However, some doors marked as fire doors are wedged open, which could compromise safety in event of a fire. The gas safety inspection is overdue.

Leadership and management

adequate

The home is a family-run concern, with a registered provider who is also the Registered Manager. They are very experienced, having worked at the home since it was established, with appropriate qualifications. However, they are not in day-to-day charge of the home, although they regularly visit and maintain an interest in young people's lives. There are two deputies who share responsibility for management tasks and one is clearly regarded as the manager by those using the service; applying for registration with Ofsted will help clarify management arrangements and define who has legal responsibility for what goes on in the home.

Managers show commitment to meeting young people's diverse needs. For example, they ensure that young women are supported to have aspirations, an education and choice over their futures, even where this may be in contradiction to cultural expectations.

Staff describe the management as 'excellent - very supportive'. They receive regular supervision and meetings to support their work with young people. In turn, there are also sound arrangements in place to ensure managers are supported and supervised.

Management is committed to ensuring staff are well trained. Staff find the training really helps develop their skills and knowledge so they are better equipped to work with young people who have varied requirements, for example, emotional, special and cultural needs.

There are positive relationships between staff and managers and other professionals involved in young people's lives so that all are working for each young person's best interests. For example, staff attend meetings in young people's education placements and regularly supply social workers with information on young people behaviour and progress. A social worker said, 'Have been impressed by the home - they keep me up-to-date and have developed a good rapport.'

The home is mostly well maintained, providing a generally comfortable environment for young people. However, a few areas are not as well maintained and detract from the rest of the home. For example, the laundry room and conservatory are in need of decoration and cleaning, some light bulbs are missing in places around the building and the garden is overgrown, so is not in an ideal state for young people use.

Like many children's homes, the service is somewhat affected by financial tightening by local authorities and also by the short term nature of some young people's placements. Nevertheless, management advises that the home is financially secure and that young people's quality of care remains unaffected.

Management has met four of the five requirements set at the last inspection,

demonstrating some capacity for improvement. The child protection policy is updated so that it now includes clear information for staff to follow in the event of any allegation. Staff now receive supervision and appraisal to support their development. Ofsted is supplied with a report of the checks management undertake; this ensures the regulator is kept informed of what is going on in the home.

The Statement of Purpose is amended to include those details missing at the last inspection. However, further gaps are found at this inspection, for example, the document does not include what age of young people the home accepts, so does not provide clear information to those who want to know about the service. Also, the regulator is not supplied with a revised copy of the Statement of Purpose as required, so new requirements relating to the Statement of Purpose are made at this inspection.

Management have only partly met the fifth requirement. Copies of staff duty rosters are now kept, but these do not provide an accurate record of who has worked in the home or when, so are not a useful record to demonstrate staffing levels. Therefore, the requirement is repeated at this inspection.

Monitoring of the home by management and an independent person is reasonable, although it has not identified the shortfalls highlighted at this inspection. It includes gathering the views of those using and working for the service to ensure these are listened to.

What inspection judgements mean

Judgement	Description
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.

Information 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 framework of inspection for children's homes.