

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Keith Riley
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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

A private company owns and operates this children's home. It is registered to accommodate three children of either sex who have emotional and or behavioural difficulties.

The home's aim, as described in the Statement of Purpose, is to provide a comfortable, safe, non-institutional environment for young people to begin to work towards a positive future. This may be staying long term or rehabilitation into the family home or a foster placement.

Overall effectiveness

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

Young people benefit from good leadership and support. Good personalised care is provided specific to the individual needs of each young person. The views and wishes of young people are actively sought. Young people and staff experience positive relationships. Staff are sensitive to the needs and abilities of young people and respect their privacy and dignity. Young people live in a safe and pleasant home that is well maintained. There is effective communication within the organisation and with other professionals to ensure positive outcomes are being achieved. However, not all written records, required by regulation, are kept at the premises and not all events requiring notification to the relevant authority are being made.

There has not been a manager registered with Ofsted since the last full inspection and there have been recent staff vacancies. This has resulted in staff leading shifts during their probation period. However, the management have now been successful in recruiting an experienced and motivated acting manager and staff team with care experience.

Young people engage in a variety of activities inside and outside the home. Young people were on school holiday during the inspection. However there are clear plans in place to access education at local colleges or in the home's own school when term time recommences.

Young people are safe in the home. There are general risk assessments for the home environment as well as for accessing activities outside the home.

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
7 (2001)	appoint and submit an application for the manager to be registered. (Regulation 7(1) (2) The Children's Homes Regulations 2001 & The Care Standards Act 2000 (Registration) (England) Regulations 2010 (Part 2, Regulation 3(1))	02/12/2011
2000	ensure written records are kept for inspection on the premises of the action taken in response to any allegation of abuse or neglect (Care Standards Act 2000 (31)(4)(a))	03/10/2011
30 (2001)	ensure if any of the events listed in column 1 of the table in Schedule 5 takes place, the registered person shall without delay notify the persons indicated in respect of the event in column 2 of the table, in particular the outcome of any child protection enquiry involving a child accommodated at the home and serious incident necessitating calling the police to the home (Regulation 30(1))	03/10/2011

Recommendations

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

- ensure a clear and comprehensive summary of any allegations made against a particular member of staff, including details of how the allegation was followed up and resolved, a record of any action taken and the decisions reached, is kept on the person's confidential file and a copy is provided to the person as soon as the investigation is concluded (NMS 20.7)
- where there has been physical restraint children are always given the opportunity to be examined by a registered nurse or medical practitioner (NMS 3.16)
- ensure staff at particular times (for example, as leaders of staff shifts) have substantial relevant experience of working in the home and have successfully completed their probationary periods. (NMS 17.5)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people have a range of support services that they can access. Staff have a good understanding of their emotional well-being. Staff are successful in meeting young people's physical, emotional and psychological needs as detailed in the personalised care plans. Young people are developing emotional resilience through good support that is given by staff and other professionals to help them deal with their emotions that they find difficult to manage. As a result, their emotional maturity

and ability to deal with stressful situations is much improved.

Trust and independence are growing as young people are supported to be as independent as they can and take responsibility for their actions. Young people are actively engaged in events in the community, such as football, snooker and basketball, often making their way independently, for example, by catching the train. Young people require lower levels of supervision due to being assessed at a lower risk of self-harm. Young people have a mature outlook and are positive about the future.

There are contact arrangements in place to ensure young people have contact with those who are important to them. Young people spend holidays with extended family members. Contact with friends and other associates is controlled when it is necessary to maintain safety levels. Staff are aware of any limitations in place for young people's safety.

Young people's health needs are identified and met, for example, any allergies are well known to the staff team. All necessary consents are on files, such as permission to administer medication and administer first aid when necessary. Staff work sensitively with young people on issues, such as sexual well-being. Young people take responsibility for their own health needs and their dignity is respected.

Young people benefit from a staff team who have a good understanding of cultural issues and respect personal preferences, such as input into the choice of meals to meet their preferences, cultural or dietary needs. Young people are learning the value of a healthy diet through the nutritious menu that is offered.

Young people are in education either in college or in the home's own school. Good progress is being made in education, with regard to starting points, with strong staff support to address any issues that arise.

Quality of care

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

Young people live in a supportive and nurturing environment. Individual care plans and an open culture inform the staff of the needs of the young people. Consistent monitoring enables staff to evaluate young people's progress on a monthly basis. This process positively contributes to statutory reviews. Young people are invited to formally contribute to reviews of these plans. However, some young people have not been able to benefit from a consistent relationship between them and a key worker. This is due to a number of staff who have left the organisation since the last inspection.

Young people benefit from staff proactively seeking the support and services they need to access education or training, such as a college place or education in the home's own school. Young people are supported to contribute to the community, for example, by volunteering in charity shops.

There is a clear complaints process for young people to address any issues they are not happy with. Young people are aware of the procedure and make good use of it to make their views known. The management takes each case seriously and provides an outcome in writing. Young people's views are also taken into account during regular key work sessions, house meetings and in general informal interaction with members of staff. In this way young people are given ample opportunities to express their views, wishes and feelings and to influence the running of the home. Young people's emotional well-being is carefully considered and taken into account when it is not possible to act upon their wishes.

Relationships between young people and staff are amiable and constructive. There is an awareness of the dynamics of relationships and the need to maintain professional boundaries. Young people's privacy and dignity is respected, for example in their own rooms. Arrangements to enter rooms, necessary for the well-being of young people, are agreed with other professionals.

The property blends into the neighbourhood and resembles a family home. There is a good commitment to provide a pleasant living environment. Young people benefit from the organisation having its own maintenance team. This means repairs are attended to promptly. Young people have their own bedroom, which they are able to personalise. Young people also contribute to the décor throughout the home such as the designs on the kitchen walls. Staff promote a healthy lifestyle. Young people are learning to understand the nutritional value of eating a good diet. Needs relating to the young people's cultural background and personal identity are being promoted to a good standard.

Bullying is not identified as an issue at the home. Staff are aware of the group dynamics and the effect any presenting behaviours have on others staying in the home. They are on hand to de-escalate any potential issues. Young people are treated respectfully by their carers and a reciprocal respect is promoted within the group.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people are kept as safe as possible by a competent staff team. Staff receive ongoing training and the induction for new staff covers child protection and safeguarding and they know who to inform if they have concerns about a young person's well-being. Staff know how to keep young people safe without limiting their free choice or liberty. Particular vulnerabilities, identified in the care plan, are well understood by staff and effectively monitored. Staff demonstrate a concise understanding of what to do if there are any safeguarding concerns. Other professionals say they are confident that staff know what to do in the event of a child protection concern. There is a professional approach in the event an allegation is made. Top priority is given to conduct a thorough investigation while keeping

young people and staff safe. Although the procedures and practices are robust, written outcomes are not always available in the home.

Positive behaviour is encouraged through a behaviour rewards system and the use of sanctions. Sanctions are appropriate, proportionate and reviewed by the manager as to their effectiveness. All members of staff receive training in the method of physical intervention used in the home. Specific interventions for individual young people are known and agreed. Staff fully understand the de-escalation techniques to be used prior to any physical intervention. There has been a minimal number of incidents requiring physical intervention since the last inspection. Young people are not always offered the opportunity, after a restraint, to be examined by a medical practitioner. However, incidents are analysed and behaviour management strategies reviewed.

Young people's safety in the community and the home is thoroughly assessed by the organisation's risk assessment procedures. Other professional involvement in this process is strong. Risk assessments are under regular review to meet the changing needs of young people. Young people are supported through difficult decisions by the staff team who are dedicated to their needs. The organisation actively liaises with other professionals to keep young people safe and explain the necessary safeguards put into place.

Young people are kept as safe as possible in the event they go missing. There is a robust relationship with the local police and excellent strategies and reporting systems in place to manage young people reported as missing. Staff are aware of what to do in this event and follow the process diligently. Each young person has an individual protocol in place as to what course of action needs to be followed. Records maintained of incidents where young people have been missing are very clear and include how the young person was supported on return to the home. Members of staff regularly contact young people when they are away from the home without permission. This not only ensures that the young people's welfare is being checked upon but also shows the young people that the staff are concerned about their welfare and want them to return home. The management, with other professionals, review the suitability of the placement when the number of missing person incidences is high.

There is a robust recruitment process that keeps young people as safe as possible from inappropriate adults. The organisation's human resource team is meticulous at checking references and employment history. All staff are subject to the recruitment checks required by regulation to keep young people safe. Staff receive regular supervision and appraisals, which helps ensure that they are able to effectively safeguard and promote young people's welfare.

Robust health and safety systems ensure that young people, staff and visitors are kept safe from risks and hazards. Health and safety certificates verify the safety of the environment. The evacuation procedure in the event of fire is known and practised.

The staff team are very aware that the young people for whom they are caring are

vulnerable and will sometimes take risks due to their troubled backgrounds. Every effort is made to ensure that the young people experience a culture where they are valued and that the adults caring for them are very concerned about their safety and well-being. Young people benefit from a robust and rigorous approach which treats their emotional and physical safety as paramount.

Leadership and management

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

Young people benefit from good staffing ratios and effective management enabling them to have the necessary individual attention. However, there have been a recent number of staff vacancies, including a Registered Manager. This has an impact on the service delivered, such as young people not having a consistent key worker and staff leading shifts during their probation period. Care practices to help young people to develop self-discipline and contribute towards their personal growth have not always filtered through to the staff team. However, the recent appointment of an acting manager, who brings a wealth of experience, is significantly improving things. Staff speak positively of the new management team and the support and guidance they receive. As a result young people are now benefitting from a more stable and structured environment. The introduction of consistent working practices which focus on enhancing young people's quality of life means young people receive every opportunity to fulfil their potential. They are supported to take pride in themselves and develop a positive identity.

The training needs of staff are identified and there is an ongoing development plan. Induction includes the Children's Workforce Development Council programme. The organisation demonstrates a good commitment to vocational qualification training. Staff also undertake training on a variety of topics which address the diverse needs of young people. This ensures that staff possess the knowledge needed to undertake their role, as well as developing their skills and awareness of professional and legal developments. Staff competence is underpinned with regular team meetings which discuss each individual young person's needs and ensure that a consistent approach is now being achieved. Regular supervision also ensures that each member of staff receives guidance from a senior member of staff. Staff describe the present leadership as 'fantastic' and 'it is a pleasure to come to work'.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The manager shows a good understanding of how young people deal with difficult and sensitive emotional issues in their lives. Young people are introduced to other cultures, for example through sampling other foods. Stereotyping is positively addressed and there is a reciprocal respect generated.

The home has a Statement of Purpose which outlines the aims and objectives of what it intends for each young person placed there. The document is subject to regular review to ensure it is accurate and relevant. There is also a young person's guide that outlines the rules and routines of the home as well as the young people's rights and responsibilities. A robust admissions procedure, that gives consideration to

compatibility issues, gives young people every chance of success while living in the home.

There are various systems to monitor the quality of care. There is regular analysis of events in the home such as complaints, incidents and restraints logs. Risk assessments are subject to regular review. The manager understands the strengths and weaknesses of the home and has a culture of continuous improvement. The systems and management of the home ensures that the care of the young people is scrutinised and that practice seeks to improve their life chances and opportunities to enrich their experience of living in the home.

Young people's needs are identified in records that are clear and up to date. They are stored securely to maintain confidentiality. However, not all events required by regulation are notified to the appropriate authority. This applies in particular to outcomes of internal child protection investigations and all incidents involving calling the police to the home. Staff files do not clearly show how allegations made against individual members of staff are followed up and resolved.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.