

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Liz Driver
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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

This home is registered to provide care for up to six young women aged from 12 to 17 years, with emotional and behavioural difficulties. The home is a large detached house. It is part of a private company which has an independent fostering agency, a total of three residential homes and an independent school.

Overall effectiveness

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

Young people, in the main, make good progress in relation to their starting points and are cared for in a supportive environment with consistent boundaries and staffing. Challenges along their journey into adult life are addressed and supported. Young people are encouraged, and do have a loud voice in the running of the home, their current and future lives. Contact with family is highly supported. The emphasis for young people to develop socially and educationally is of a good standard. All young people attend school and attendance levels are generally good. Staff actively promote safe working practices and are experienced in identifying and dealing with safeguarding concerns. Young people are able to form healthy relationships with staff and other professionals and as a result are able to address all areas of their lives within a safe environment. Young people are happy at the setting and feel the quality of care is good. Young people stated, 'I don't want to leave this home, it's the best home I have been in'.

The manager has enhanced the monitoring of the home and its practices, resulting in improved outcomes for young people and good standards of care. The organisation, despite its current financial difficulties, shows a clear commitment in ensuring young people receive suitable care in a home with good resources. There is a comprehensive plan for the home to move forward.

The setting has a robust recruitment process in place. Policies and procedures are of a very good standard although recent changes to the national minimum standards relating to child protection and contact details of the Children's Rights Director have not yet been implemented. Ofsted is also awaiting an application for the manager to register. These omissions do not have a significant impact on the quality of the daily care of the children.

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
7 (2001)	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))	31/08/2011

Recommendations

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

- ensure the homes child protection procedures are submitted for consideration and comment to the Local Safeguarding Children's Board and to the Local Authority Designated Officer and any conflicts are discussed and resolved as far as possible (NMS 20.4)
- ensure the children's guide contains information of how children can contact their Independent Reviewing Officer and the Children's Rights Director. (NMS 13.5)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people have good support from a dedicated staff team and other professionals to meet their physical, emotional and psychological needs. Young people are dealing effectively with the challenging emotive issues in their lives. At times where this may prove difficult, staff are supportive and caring in assisting young people to face their fears. The link worker system enables young people to focus on their goals and regular meetings provide an avenue for young people to discuss their feelings. Young people have access to a wide range of information and advice on health issues in conjunction with formal education at their schools. The setting has clearly focused on improving education attendance and achievement with some good outcomes seen. There is good communication between the school and home. Staff ensure they attend meetings about the young people's education and address any issues that are raised.

Health care is of a good standard with all young people having access to a local doctor, dentist and optician. Appropriate consents are in place for medical matters. Specific and specialist health provision is provided by professionals external to the home and staff support young people to engage positively with them.

Young people engage in a range of activities outside the home such as swimming, shopping and working locally after school and at weekends. Staff are currently putting together a programme of activities to cover the school summer holidays. Staff have also arranged for young people to gain work experience as a result of innovative planning and action. Young people are encouraged to be as independent as possible, for example by using public transport. At the appropriate age young people have good transition plans in place to prepare them for adult life. There are clear achievable targets in place with incentives to underpin the work toward independence. These cover a range of skills that will be needed in adult life such as domestic skills, cooking, shopping and budgeting and are appropriate to individual capabilities.

Young people are supported to maintain contact with family and friends. Individual files contain up to date information about contact details with restrictions also noted so staff can keep them safe. Young people also use email and mobile phones to maintain contact. Young people's behaviours, in the main, have improved with a decrease in the number of incidents, notifications of serious incidents, physical interventions, incidents of missing children and child protection referrals seen throughout individual records.

Young people clearly have a voice in the running of the home and in their futures. They feel they are listened to and changes are made as a result of their views, opinions and wishes. Regular link worker sessions enable young people to build very good relationship with dedicated members of staff and to be well informed of placement objectives. Young people are encouraged and supported to attend their placement reviews and to express their views and wishes of their current and future lives.

Quality of care

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

Young people live within a supportive and nurturing environment. Care plans, which are regularly reviewed, clearly identify individual needs that staff can work together with the young people to meet. Relationships between staff and young people are amiable and constructive. Staff are aware of the group dynamics in the home and are on hand to de-escalate any potential issues. Systems in place enable young people to contribute to the running of the home with input about food, activities and decoration. Young people feel staff are supportive and committed to their welfare.

Information is made available to the young people so they know how, and to whom they can make a complaint. They confirmed they know how the process works. Young people can be sure that all complaints are taken seriously with a robust investigation carried out in close liaison with other professionals, if indicated, and outcomes relayed back to the complainant. Records of complaints are well-maintained and monitored by the acting manager.

Care plans contain good up-to-date information about young people, including their educational needs. Records kept give an accurate understanding of the young person's current emotional state and needs. Staff provide clear boundaries that young people understand; when they experience times of difficulty, staff are fully supportive. Young people feel comfortable with staff and in general respond positively to staff intervention. They know why they are at the setting and contribute to placement reviews with support. Staff are fully informed of individual placement plans and deliver good standards of care to meet placement objectives. At times, young people's behaviour can affect objectives and targets, but the staff work hard to put in different strategies and firm boundaries to bring the young people back on track. Access to services appropriate for individual young people enables their physical, emotional and psychological health needs to be met. There is a clear commitment to developing practices and knowledge to further improve outcomes for young people.

Education attendance and achievement is generally good in relation to individual ability. Staff are proactive and consistent in supporting educational achievements. Young people receive good levels of support to ensure they attend school and positively address challenges and barriers to educational progress and achievement. Additional school tuition is sought for young people to gain further skills, such as additional languages. Young people can expect staff to liaise with schools and all records relating to education are kept in very good order.

Young people are encouraged to participate in, and enjoy, a good range of activities on offer. Engagement in activities varies, but staff work hard to provide individual choices and continually identify activities young people may enjoy. Staff are sensitive to young people's needs relating to areas such as gender, disability, sexuality, faith, and religious beliefs and these are identified before arrival and form part of individual placement plans. Staff are able to address sensitive issues and provide appropriate non-discriminatory support for young people's needs. They treat young people with respect and dignity and the same expectation is made clear of the young people. Young people live in a home that is appropriately located, well-designed and

maintained to a very good standard. There is ample space for young people to have private time.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Systems, policies and procedures for child protection and safeguarding are robust, and place the young people at the heart of all care practice. Staff are trained and experienced in identifying risky behaviours, dealing with allegations and educating young people to keep themselves safe. Young people stated they feel safe at the setting. They also recognised they do at times engage in risky behaviours, because of individual vulnerabilities that impact on their safety. Young people stated staff work closely with them to lessen the risks and they identified behaviours that had positively changed since being at the setting. Individual risk assessments highlight risks and strategies for staff to use to lessen the risks. Individual records and logs show a decrease in the number of incidents, physical interventions, missing persons, and child protection referrals. The home's current child protection and safeguarding policy has not been submitted for consideration and comment to the Local Safeguarding Children's Board and to the Local Authority Designated Officer for child protection.

Staff are experienced in managing physical interventions, missing persons, challenging behaviours and work with the police and procedures to ensure consistency of practice. Any deviation from this are quickly acted on by senior managers with good outcomes. Staff have good relationships with the local police and if a young person does go missing, their practice protects young people as far as possible. Records show there to be a decrease in the frequency young people go missing. Any increase is understood by staff and worked through with placing social workers and the young person.

Young people can expect any incidents of bullying to be quickly acted on and responded to robustly and strongly. Staff are very clear of individual triggers and work closely with young people to lessen the risks. Young people are informed of the home's stance regarding bullying. Young people felt comfortable in speaking to staff if they felt they were being bullied and felt staff took it seriously.

Staff promote positive behaviour with incentive schemes offering individual rewards, to which young people respond well. Sanctions are low in number and young people felt these were generally fair. Young people agree that staff work to safeguard them and do speak out if they feel staff practice does not protect them. Senior managers respond to any such incidents quickly and appropriately. The manager is skilled at monitoring behaviour, including the number of physical interventions, and takes appropriate action to reduce its use. This has a positive impact at the setting with a decrease in interventions taking place.

The home responds to allegations or suspicions of harm quickly, fairly and in a consistent way. Support for any person or young person subject to allegations is in place and effective. Young people live in a home where health and safety procedures are comprehensively addressed to a good standard. Risk management systems are robust, well-organised and maintained to good standards. Fire safety procedures are well known to staff and young people, with very regular checks of fire alarms, smoke detectors and emergency lighting. External contractors regularly check the gas and electrical installations. Young people take pride in the home, there is very little damage and it is suitably secure.

Young people are further protected by the organisation's robust recruitment procedures that follow safer recruitment standards. Staff appropriately monitor any visitors to the home and maintain a visitor's book.

Leadership and management

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

There is a clear management structure in the organisation. This home is managed by an experienced and effective manager who is currently not registered with Ofsted. There are systems in place for the manager to monitor and develop practices further to enable continual improvement and better outcomes for children. Communication between the manager and staff is very good, with staff very well informed of all aspects of the home. The manager is supported by two deputy managers and a staff team who have worked at the setting for many years with a wealth of experience and commitment. This has proven particularly advantageous during the recent difficult financial times the organisation is experiencing. At no point during the inspection was there any evidence that the current financial difficulties were having a negative impact on the resources or care the young people are in receipt of. The organisation has kept Ofsted and local authorities fully up to date with the situation. A moving forward plan is in place that addresses the future of the home.

The regulation 33 monthly monitoring of the service is of a good standard and enables the home to reflect and move forward. There was one requirement and three recommendations made at the last inspection, relating to maintaining an accurate and up to date record of measures of control used, ensuring all records contain the signature of a person authorised by the registered person to make the record, ensuring testing of fire equipment and emergency lighting is recorded correctly to show regular tests are happening and ensuring the registered person of the home regularly reviews the implementation and effectiveness of action identified as a result of risk assessments carried out. All have been suitably addressed.

The home has an up-to-date Statement of Purpose. Minor amendments are needed in the children's guide in relation to contact details, so how young people know how to contact their Independent Reviewing Officer and the Children's Rights Director. Young people benefit from good staffing ratios enabling them to have individual attention. Young people are happy around the staff team and enjoy their company.

Young people's individual needs in relation to their ethnicity and family backgrounds are considered. Policies and procedures comprehensively address equality and diversity. There is a commitment to anti-discriminatory practice and fairness to all. Relationships between staff and children are professional and respectful. Staff are very well-informed of individual needs relating to race, religion, sexuality, and ethnicity. There are consistent working practices which focus on enhancing young people's quality of life, so young people receive support to take pride in themselves and develop a positive identity. Young people are encouraged to be positive about themselves and supported to achieve their individual goals. When times are difficult for children, staff do not give up.

Young people receive care from a staff team who are themselves well supported and enthusiastic about their roles. The organisation demonstrates a commitment to staff training on a variety of topics which address the diverse needs of young people. Staff feel their training needs are met and positively engage in training on offer, both internal and external.

The staffing levels are good with a mix of gender and ethnicity. Young people feel

safe and comfortable in staff presence and were complimentary about them. Staff work hard to form close relationships with young people and to promote trust. The results are such that young people feel safe and cared for which enables them to focus positively on their journey into adult life, addressing challenges in collaboration with other agencies.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.