

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC016697
Inspection date	12/07/2012
Inspector	Barbara Davies
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	27/02/2012
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This is a privately owned children's home which is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to four young people with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. The home continues to be fully occupied.

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 placed in this home consistently make extremely good progress in all aspects of their development. The progress they make is largely attributed to the highly personalised care that staff are able to deliver as a result of high staffing levels. Individual needs are extremely well met and young people thrive in a stable and nurturing environment in which staff are attentive and responsive to their needs.

Staff have a good knowledge and understanding of safe working practices and young people say they feel safe in the home. Social workers emphatically confirm that the home provides a safe environment in which young people are able to come to terms with 'some very complex and traumatic issues.' Staff are extremely competent in managing the behaviour of young people. Young people are clear about the expectations and have a considerate and respectful approach to each other and to the staff. Boundaries are consistently and reasonably reinforced by staff. Sanctions are used sparingly and the rare occasions of physical restraint have been to prevent injury.

The responsible individual of the service is also the Registered Manager. All staff are highly committed to the young people and create an environment which is stimulating and fun. Staff have high aspirations for young people and social workers give an indication of the high regard in which they hold the home by saying 'I wish I could replicate it several times over so that more children could have the benefit of being cared for by this organisation'.

Shortfalls identified in this inspection largely relate to record keeping.

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
17 (2001)	ensure that within 24 hours of the use of any measure of control, discipline or restraint in a children's home, a written record is made in a volume kept for the purpose which shall include points (a)-(f) of this regulation- this refers to maintaining a central record of sanctions and one of physical restraints in addition to the individual records kept (Regulation 17B (3)(a-f))	31/08/2012
17B (2001)	ensure that where a restraint is used on a child the record required under Regulation 17(3) contains the duration of the restraint and details of any measure used to avoid the need to use that measure (Regulation 17(4)(a)(b))	31/07/2012
34 (2001)	ensure that the registered person shall establish a system for monitoring the matters set out in Schedule 6 at appropriate intervals; improving the quality of care provided in the children's home and supply to HMCI a report in in respect of any such review. (Regulation 34 (1)(2))	31/07/2012

Recommendations

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

- ensure the manager regularly monitors, in line with regulations, all records kept by the home to ensure compliance with the home's policies, to identify any concerns about specific incidents and to identify patterns and trends, this refers specifically to the records specified in Schedule 6 (NMS 21.2)
- ensure visits to the home carried out under Regulation 33 include relevant checks set out in regulations and guidance, checks of any disciplinary measures and use of restraint and missing person's reports. (NMS 21.7)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

From their point of admission to the home, all young people have made considerable

progress. The long-term nature of their placements has provided them with the stability they need to develop emotional resilience and mature into sensible young people and young adults. Staff are extremely competent in helping young people understand their histories, deal with any residual problems and prevent these from hampering personal development. Social workers say that 'the skill, integrity and empathy of the staff team have been critical in helping young people progress.' Staff also support young people well when exploring their own identities and are advised of how they can access independent advice and support if they want to

Staff are consistently successful in supporting young people to maintain regular attendance at school or vocational courses, often after long periods of absence. An imaginative and innovative approach is taken to address the educational needs of young people who have been excluded from school and for whom it is difficult to secure an alternative educational placement. These young people are initially home-educated with the use of qualified home tutors. This has been a highly effective strategy in helping young people bridge some of the gaps in their education and enabling them to secure reintegration to mainstream school. Staff are persistent, committed and successful in supporting young people to achieve to their potential and to obtain academic qualifications. They mostly remain in education beyond school leaving age and pursue vocational courses. Some young people have part-time jobs. This helps them develop social networks, increases their confidence and prepares them well for adulthood.

Young people are extremely settled in the home and are supported to move towards adulthood at a pace with which they are comfortable, often remaining in the home beyond their 18th birthday. This enables them to achieve all the adolescent milestones and direction before moving on. Relationships between staff and young people are extremely positive and behaviour is mostly good. Young people do not place themselves at risk by going missing or offending. They enjoy a healthy lifestyle and take responsibility for some of their own medical health needs. Good health outcomes have been achieved with some young people having been weaned off the medication they were taking on admission. Other health issues have been identified, as a result of the perseverance of staff in seeking a diagnosis, and this has enabled the young people to obtain the treatment they need.

The quality of contact that young people have with their families and peers has improved, over time as a result of the proactive and sympathetic way in which staff manage these arrangements. Social workers say that 'family members as well as young people are supported well and this enables young people to mostly have positive contact with those that are important to them'

Young people take part in activities, holidays and hobbies in the community. Through these activities they become confident and cement relationships with the staff and their peers.

Quality of care

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

Staff consistently and genuinely have high aspirations for all young people in the home. Their well-being is considered paramount and at the forefront of their practice. The committed, child-focused approach of staff is clearly evident in their approach. The enthusiasm of long-term staff is quickly transmitted to those who have only been in post for a short while. Young people recognise that staff care about them and say 'the staff have been really good to me, I hope that other children are able to come here and have the same wonderful experiences that I have had.'

They create social and educational opportunities that enable young people to develop skills and compete on the same footing as their peers. Staff consistently challenge barriers that prevent the inclusion of young people. For instance, they recently posed a robust and successful challenge to the local education authority in order to secure places in mainstream school for some young people.

Young people are aware of how to make a complaint and identify staff and external professionals they say they can talk to. Complaints are rare and young people are extremely satisfied with the standard of care they receive. Similarly, social workers are extremely positive about the quality of care delivered.

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Care planning is highly individualised and most young people recognise the contribution and involvement they have in the service. Their ability to influence the care planning and statutory review process results in young people expressing high levels of satisfaction with the care they receive. Placing social workers say, 'I have never encountered another home who empowers young people to steer their own reviews in the way that this one does. My young person ran his own review which was a really humbling experience.' Staff are innovative in the way that they support young people to express their views during reviews of their care, including the use of video footage.

Similarly the views of young people significantly influence the daily running of the home. Although young people express a dislike of formal house meetings, there are plenty of informal opportunities for their views to influence the decisions made. It is a natural and instinctive part of staff practice to consult individually and, where appropriate, as a group before making a decision. Consequently young people demonstrate a high investment in the home and have a high positive regard for staff.

All aspects of young people's health are considered. Most young people are able to give examples of how their health has improved as a result of being supported, by staff, to access appropriate services. Health needs are well met on a day-to-day basis with the provision of a healthy diet, opportunities for exercise and, dependent on need, access to appropriate medical interventions. Arrangements for the

administration of medication are clear, safe and effective.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people are protected by the knowledge that staff have of the home's policies and procedures and their consistent application of these in practice. Young people do not go missing but staff are aware of the action to take to protect young people should such instances occur. When safeguarding concerns arise, staff work effectively with external agencies, such as the police, social workers and Local Authority Designated Officer to minimise risk and safeguard the welfare of young people. They work to the agreed strategies and at the same time give young people the emotional support they need. Social workers say that 'I cannot praise staff highly enough. They have not only provided a physically safe environment but have also helped my young person to feel emotionally secure enough to disclose highly sensitive and personal issues.

All young people feel extremely safe and protected in the home. The home provides a safe environment in which risks are carefully considered and reduced. Staff support young people to take age-appropriate risks while taking the appropriate precautions to keep them safe. This helps them to develop and mature into responsible young adults. Young people know about how to keep themselves safe as a result of the guidance they receive from staff. Staff and young people know that bullying is unacceptable and say that this is not an issue.

Young people are protected by the proactive approach taken to behaviour management. Staff are trained in behaviour management and physical restraint techniques and consistently apply these in practice. Staff value young people and treat them with respect. The use of praise and incentives together with the celebration of achievements provides young people with the additional incentive to behave appropriately.

There are few incidents of challenging behaviour. Physical restraint is seldom used and continues to decline further. This is largely as a result of the consistent approach taken by staff in supporting young people to reflect on their behaviour and develop mechanisms for managing their own behaviour. Records kept in relation to sanctions and physical restraint however, do not contain all the detail required by regulations, such as the full name of the child and staff member, any other people present or the views of the child about the physical restraint. While young people raise no concerns and say, 'we are treated very fairly,' the home is unable to fully demonstrate this. As only initials and not full names are used in the records, it may prove difficult to identify children or staff if complaints are made in the future.

The home's recruitment procedures are mostly consistently applied and safeguard young people from having contact with unsuitable adults. Some minor shortfalls were found in relation to the number of written references that had been obtained. The risks posed to young people as a result of this were minimised as a result of the

telephone checks that were made and the personal knowledge of the candidates by the Registered Manager.

Leadership and management

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

The home is effectively and successfully run with a keen focus on improving outcomes. There are no outstanding requirements or recommendations from the previous inspection. The responsible individual, who is also the Registered Manager, is extremely well qualified for the post she holds. She is committed, sets high standards of care and aims to continually improve the service. As the responsible individual is in day-to-day charge of the home, there is no requirement for a person to visit the home to assess the quality of care. It is however indicative of the commitment of the service to drive standards forward that arrangements have been made for this to happen. However, reports of these visits do not show that the home's records have routinely been checked.

All Independent Reviewing Officers, involved with the service, say that improving outcomes for children is the clear priority of the children's home. Although there is no written development plan and reviews of the quality of care are not routinely forwarded to Ofsted as required, the agenda of continual improvement is apparent. There has been considerable investment in the facilities since the interim inspection, such as the erection of a conservatory. This has considerably improved the range of amenities for young people.

Young people say that they are well cared for and they themselves show high levels of investment in the home. There are however some practices which are in breach of regulations. These largely amount to the records that are kept. None of these shortfalls currently have a big impact on young people due to the low levels of incidents and other sources of information that are held in the home. They could however, potentially prevent tracking of information in the future, when individual files have been archived.

The Statement of Purpose is clear, accessible and comprehensive. Young people are clear about what the home sets out to achieve as they are given a children's guide that informs them about the service. They say they find the information in this helpful.

Although there have been some recent changes in the composition of the staff team, a core team of adults remain who provide continuity of care. Changes in staff have been well managed and have caused little disruption to young people largely as a result of the lengthy and well-structured induction process. The staff team is well-balanced in terms of age, gender and life experience which provides young people with a richness of experiences and relationships. The home is well resourced to meet the needs of young people and high staffing levels are provided on each shift.

Young people benefit from being cared for by a staff team who themselves are

supported in their work. Professional supervision and staff meetings mostly take place regularly. They provide opportunities for staff to develop strategies for working with young people and promote consistency. New staff are familiarised with their role and develop the required skills and competencies through induction training. Most staff are however, well experienced and suitably qualified. This translates into the delivery of good, safe care.

Young people are also protected by the arrangements that are in place to meet health and safety requirements. Regular checking of equipment enables maintenance issues to be addressed. Young people are familiar with evacuation procedures and know the action to take to keep themselves safe in the event of a fire.

The manager and staff have excellent working relationships with key professionals in other agencies. Placing social workers comment positively on the frequent and good quality exchange and update of information.

Significant events relating to the protection of young people are notified to the appropriate authorities by the Registered Manager so that the responsible authorities can consider whether any action, other than that already taken by the home, needs to be taken.

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.