

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Robin Whistlecraft
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This children's home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to five young people of either gender with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. The home is privately owned and the organisation operates other children's homes in the area.

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 make good progress in this home, developing personal and social skills and self-confidence. This is because they receive individualised care, based on up-to-date care and behaviour management plans, from competent staff with whom they develop trusting relationships. The home effectively monitors young people's behaviour and promotes positive behaviour. Young people's views influence the running of the home.

Staff work well with other professionals involved with the young people. Young people generally make good progress in education, significantly improving their attendance. Some young people make exceptional progress because of the imaginative and proactive support that staff provide.

The home's managers are committed to continually improving the quality of care practiced in the home. The home operates detailed risk assessments in relation to the leisure activities that young people experience there. Young people feel safe in the home and are safe. The home's management has not kept up to date with legislation and guidance regarding fire risk assessments for residential childcare, but are aware of the discrepancy between policy and practice and are working on this.

This report contains six requirements and one recommendation for areas for improvement. The requirements relate to the manager receiving training in relation to fire safety requirements and a competent person carrying out a fire risk assessment of the home. The home is also required to have a telephone for young

people to use in private, without recourse to staff. Managers need to record the actual working times for all staff on duty rosters and notify Her Majesty's Chief Inspector about all relevant significant events relating to the home. Managers also need to improve a few aspects of the home's décor. Managers need to ensure that some records are not ambiguous.

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
15 (2001)	ensure that children accommodated in the home are provided at all reasonable times with access to a telephone on which to make and receive calls in private (Regulation 15 (4)(a))	06/12/2013
29 (2001)	maintain in the children's home the records specified in Schedule 4 and ensure they are kept up to date. This relates to the duty rosters of persons working in the home, and the rosters actually worked (Regulation 29 (1))	06/12/2013
31 (2001)	ensure that all parts of the children's home used by children are kept clean and reasonably decorated and maintained (Regulation 31 (2))	06/12/2013
30 (2001)	ensure if, in relation to a children's home, any of the events listed in column 1 of the table in Schedule 5 takes place, he shall without delay notify the persons indicated in respect of the event in column 2 of the table (Regulation 30 (1))	06/12/2013

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people make good progress, some of them exceptional progress, in this home. Some develop an understanding of their backgrounds and some of them learn to manage difficult family relationships. They learn to manage their frustration, and they develop social skills and self-confidence. As a result, they reduce self-harming behaviour, have more unsupervised time out of the home and develop social interests in the community. One said: 'I have changed since being here. I can manage my anger and language, doing things in the right way. I think before speaking.'

Young people enjoy a healthy, balanced diet and take part in activities involving physical exercise. Some young people significantly improve their weight-to-height

ratio because of this. Young people are supported to have regular check-ups with relevant health professionals. Although some young people smoke, they have access to smoking cessation support, which some of them have tried. Where applicable, young people have taken responsibility for their health by reducing their risk taking behaviour in relation to their sexual health. This is because they have developed better understanding of the risks involved.

Young people attend education and make significant progress. For example, some have learned to read and develop basic numeracy since living at this home. Others are passing exams, receiving recognition for their efforts and are making a positive contribution to their school community, for example by assisting with catering for open evenings. On those occasions when young people fail to engage in education the service endeavours to seek further education and suitable work experience. These factors mean that young people are in a position to acquire skills and knowledge that will help equip them in later work and life. One social worker commented: 'My young person has gone from none to full-time education...and has gone up two levels in mathematics. For most young people, the very act of going to school is a marked improvement on their situation before coming to this home.'

Young people influence decisions about the food they eat and the activities that they experience in their leisure time. They contribute to the home by being involved in chores at the weekend. Young people have good opportunities to positively engage with the local community through membership of clubs and groups such as the scouts.

Young people have appropriate contact with their families. They develop awareness of interactions within their families, and how to manage them in different ways. The home provides mobile telephones for young people's use and most have a mobile phone. However, there can be a delay between a young person being admitted to the home and receipt of a personal mobile phone. During this period, they have to ask to use the office telephone which is a mobile device. However, young people confirmed that they do not encounter obstacles if they ask to use the office telephone. Therefore, the arrangements are not currently having an adverse impact on young people.

Young people develop basic practical skills for adulthood and are confident that they have the necessary skills. This is because, according to their age, they learn personal hygiene skills, to keep their bedrooms clean and tidy and to launder their clothes. They also help with cooking and receive incentives to help with domestic chores around the home. Older young people look forward to moving on to an organised independence-training programme. This programme enables them to see what skills and knowledge they have, and where they may need to develop further, across a range of modules.

Quality of care

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

Young people generally enjoy positive relationships with each other and think that the support they receive from staff is good or very good. In response to a survey by Ofsted one said: 'The staff are very caring people, the young people are nice people to get on with.' Staff focus on developing constructive relationships with young people, especially through the home's key working system. One young person commented in an Ofsted survey: 'My key worker is the most loveliest person I've ever met; she is always there for me and I know I can tell her anything without her judging me.'

Staff encourage young people to express their views and wishes informally and formally through regular group and individual meetings. They understand if the home is not able to act on their wishes because staff explain why. Young people know how to make a complaint. Those that have done so confirm that they are treated fairly afterwards. Staff encourage young people to influence decisions about food, activities and choices in the home's décor and their bedrooms. Young people are also involved in the process for selecting new staff. They do this by asking questions of candidates and giving their views to selection panels. These factors mean that young people have significantly influenced the running of the home.

Young people are cared for in line with their placement plans. This is because they receive individualised care, such as behaviour management strategies and rewards systems, which managers ensure reflect their placement plans. Staff have good knowledge of the young people's needs and backgrounds. The home has effective recording systems to measure young people's progress in relation to key concerns and needs. The home makes an effective contribution to young people's care planning. One professional commented that, 'the home's looked after children review report was very thorough.' Staff involve young people in the care planning process. One said: 'I don't write in it but they write down what you say; they ask questions and that is put in the review.' This means that young people experience care that reflects their needs and involvement.

Staff carefully plan meals to be balanced and nutritious. The use of colour coding on menus enables young people to see how staff balance their meals and how they contribute to a healthy diet. Staff tell young people who smoke about the risks and encourage them to attend specialist smoking cessation clinics. Staff talk to sexually active young people about the risks and enable them to get specialist advice and support in relation to contraception and sexual health. The home registers young people with health specialists such as general practitioners, dentists and opticians and staff make regular appointments for the young people. The home's system for administering medication is safe and effective. These factors mean that young people live in a healthy environment that works to address their needs.

Staff effectively support young people's education. They are proactive, for example, by covering for social workers in young people's personal education planning meetings. They are also imaginative in seeking to overcome barriers to young people's education. For example, staff develop games with household objects to help develop numeracy. This approach means that young people are able to re-engage with education after missing, or disrupting their education, for substantial periods

before coming to the home.

Young people have access to a range of leisure activities while living at the home. Some take part in after-school sports clubs for the first time in their lives. Others join local sports and special interest clubs. Some simply enjoy the special outings to theme parks and entertainment centres that staff arrange from time to time. This means that young people are able to enjoy purposeful and constructive leisure activities.

The home operates cultural theme nights each month. These involve young people and staff in tasting food and learning about the culture of a different country. The home has also enabled open discussion about sexual orientation. Young people's plans identify individual and diverse needs, including where some have not lived with their birth families. These factors mean that young people experience positive examples of diversity as well as attention to their sense of identity.

Managers generally maintain the home to a satisfactory standard but some aspects need attention. For example, there is some mould on the ceiling above the young people's bath and ceiling paper is lifting in a young person's bedroom. These do not adversely affect young people because the home is generally homely and child focused in its décor.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Managers carefully vet prospective staff members before they start work in the home. Staff understand their safeguarding responsibilities if they suspect or are told about possible child abuse. Young people say they feel safe in the home and that there is no bullying. This means they are confident that there are adults in the home they can talk to if they feel unsafe.

Young people rarely go missing from the home and there are clear procedures, reflecting young people's individual needs and risks, if they do. Those procedures reflect the local police protocols for young people who go missing. The home negotiates specific agreements with the police that set out agreed actions, if young people's going missing behaviour raises particular concerns. The provision of mobile telephones enables staff to contact young people if there are concerns about their whereabouts. These factors mean that the home protects young people as far as possible if they do go missing.

Some young people occasionally take risks, such as experimenting with drugs. Behaviour management plans and individual risk assessments clearly identify young people's needs and the agreed strategies for addressing them. Managers have also introduced a detailed system and thorough procedure for assessing the risks associated with a range of leisure activities such as swimming or going go karting. Individual activity risk assessments for each young person then integrate with the activity risk assessment. Prior to each activity staff read the activity risk assessments,

including each young person's relevant activity risk assessment, and sign to indicate they have done so. This system and procedure promote the safety of young people.

Staff promote positive behaviour through the use of reward systems, tailored to each young person. The home keeps clear plans for each young person, with an effective system for making staff aware of changes to those plans. Staff only use physical restraint as a last resort, and they clearly record why it was necessary. Staff feel supported because managers explore the incident with them afterwards. Young people are confident that staff know how to use physical restraint properly and that they prefer not to. One young person said: 'Staff hate using restraint, but they know what they are doing when they restrain someone.'

Safety is promoted with regular service checks, including of fire safety equipment. Regular fire drills ensure young people and staff know what to do in the event of a fire.

Leadership and management

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

The home has a Registered Manager. The home's management is committed to continually improving the home, for example, by refining care systems such as shift handover records and introducing shift leaders. They learn from incidents and introduce new procedures such as activity-based risk assessments. This means young people experience steadily improving care.

Managers monitor young people's behaviour while living in the home in order to improve the effectiveness of the home's care. Managers and staff routinely consult with young people, both as a group to include their wishes, and individually, for example, when addressing issues around contact arrangements with parents. This means the home's management appropriately involves young people in matters that affect them.

Young people live in a home where managers want to keep improving the quality of care. This is because managers largely understand the home's strengths and weaknesses and have a clear development plan for making improvements. The provider carries out regular monitoring visits and the home's management takes appropriate actions in response to the visitor's recommendations. The home's management undertakes regular reviews of the quality of care provided in the home. These address all of the required elements and identify where the home's managers are seeking to make improvement.

The home employs a suitable number of staff who receive regular, valued supervision from their managers. Staff undertake regular refresher training in a range of core subjects. Managers identify and meet individual staff training needs. Managers use supervision and staff meetings to improve staff awareness and knowledge, including awareness of improvements to care practices and changes in young people's plans. These factors mean that a competent staff team cares for

young people.

The home has developed effective and supportive relationships with other professionals involved in young people's care. This means that young people benefit from care that managers promote through effective partnerships with other professionals. A social worker commented: 'They have very good relationships with other agencies.'

Records are stored securely and are generally clear and up to date. However, some records are not clear and could mislead, for example, wrongly suggesting the use of physical restraint. Also, records of duty rosters do not include the actual times that some managers and staff worked. Because the information is available elsewhere there is not an adverse impact on young people.

The home has not notified Ofsted about all significant events that have taken place in the home. This means that the home has not promoted young people's welfare by enabling the regulator to assess the actions taken by the home following the events.

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.