

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Julian Parker
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Provision subtype	Children's home

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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

The home is a medium to long stay children's home which takes mainly planned admissions, but is able to accommodate young people in an emergency when necessary. It is operated by a private company. The home can accommodate up to five young people between the ages of eight and 16. Currently four young people are living here.

Overall effectiveness

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

This home provides young people with a very supportive, comfortable environment in which to live. The quality of care and outcomes for young people are considered good. Young people often show, through behaviour, that they feel safe and when compliant they successfully influence the care and education they receive.

The placement provides a very reassuring place of safety for young people with challenging behaviour to address their issues within a community based children's home. This home provides many facilities and opportunities for helping young people address the behaviour that led to placement and to keep themselves safe. The management and staff of the home provide exceptional support for young people, consistently encouraging them to fully engage with the stability and opportunities being made available.

The understanding and integration of equality and diversity within day-to-day practice and homes recording, is good. There is room for structural improvement relating to the decoration and condition of some parts of the home and in practice by the way young people are provided with access to independent persons following a period of unauthorised absence.

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
31 (2001)	ensure that all parts of the children's home are kept clean and reasonably decorated and maintained. Specifically, improve the overall condition of the conservatory area and the bath and shower surrounds in the first floor bathroom. (Regulation 31	16/09/2011

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Recommendations

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

- ensure children who go missing are responded to positively on their return. Specifically, that an in-depth interview that should be carried out by a professional independent of the placement. (NMS 5)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people benefit from having on-site education, encouraging reintegration into regular school attendance. Educational timetables are developed to expand upon young peoples existing interests and extend their learning recognising their assessed capabilities. Personal educational plans include realistic targets which young people understand and can meet, using the flexible curriculum that may extend beyond the classroom. Young people respond to this approach well and to the variety and bespoke nature of their lessons. Whenever possible, young people are supported to return to full-time education in mainstream schools to enhance achievement.

Staff support young people to maintain contact with family and friends through the provision of practical support and transport. Provision can be made for visits to occur within the home on special occasions. Young people do not presently use the home's landline telephone without permission from the staff. This means that young people would need to ask to contact family, friends or their social worker if they were unhappy about aspects of the home. However, the home has provided young people with economical mobile phones to facilitate their contact and safety when in the community.

Young people are encouraged to develop their independence skills through support and guidance by staff. Young people are able to shop for food, cook meals and learn about other cultures as part of the homes commitment to promoting awareness and diversity. Cultural support is actively provided to young people of various faiths when admitted to the home.

Quality of care

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

Staff provide a good and consistent level of care to young people to ensure that they can achieve positive outcomes from their placement.

Young people quickly form relationships based on trust and caring with the staff at this home. There is a friendly and good natured atmosphere which young people find helpful, unthreatening and supportive when they begin to fully engage with the homes routines. For example, young people do not experience rejection or intolerance when they present challenging behaviour. They can achieve their potential by accepting help from staff to engage with any legitimate activities that interest them. Special occasions such as birthdays and religious festivals are celebrated by the staff team to make the day a special event for young people. Young people are encouraged to express their views about the home and suggest changes that may improve the service they receive individually and collectively.

In their responses young people said they understand the homes complaints' procedure although rarely need to use it. There is information about complaints, written in a style suitable for young people to access within their welcome booklet, the young person's guide to the home.

Young people play an active role in developing the placement plans that influence how they are cared for. A social worker commented that 'staff could not do more to keep his client safe'. Placement plans are comprehensively written and include the assessed needs and views of young people. Young people contribute to their plans and know what information they contain by being discussed with their key workers. Detailed information about the health, education and cultural needs of each young person are contained within plans that are regularly reviewed by their placing authority independent reviewing officer within statutory timescales. The home's manager assertively follows up any failure to return the completed document in a timely manner following a review, thereby ensuring that the placement objectives are actively progressed.

The listed building in which the home is set, spans three floors. It provides individual and communal space for up to five residents but is rarely occupied to this number. The home is ideally located in an urban area, to take full advantage of the recreational, leisure, educational and retail facilities of the local town. The children's home is inconspicuous, in-keeping with the local neighbourhood. Whereas most of the communal space within the home is maintained and decorated to a very good standard, some areas of the house show signs of age, wear and tear and require some structural improvement.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people are valued and respected. By building up trust in their carers and living in a protective environment, they are helped to feel and keep themselves safe. Staff

are well trained and fully aware of the child protection and safeguarding procedures, including how to make a formal report in the event of a significant incident occurring. A rolling programme of training ensures the knowledge of staff providing care is kept up to date. This protects young people from emerging threats such as exploitation or cyber-bullying.

The home has an overt awareness of bullying behaviour and makes the unacceptability of this behaviour clearly known to all its resident young people. Any suspicions or concerns are always acted upon promptly. The home has a nominated member of staff who takes lead responsibility for all aspects and information dissemination about of this type of behaviour. Young people do not report that bullying is a concern.

Each young person has their own room. Staff demonstrate respect for young people's personal space by not entering without knocking or permission. Young people can keep their rooms locked and personalise them in a style that reflects their interests. The personal and confidential information held on file about young people is kept safe by the homes manager. Young people know that they can access this should they wish.

There are clear procedures that ensure all staff know how to respond should a young person go missing from the home. Incident reports confirm that current practice follows the home's procedures. Established protocols with the local police are followed and take account of any specific vulnerability and risk from this type of behaviour which informs the priority of response. For example, staff will always look for young people before reporting them missing to the police. The Registered Manager and staff are fully aware of the national guidance for children on missing from care and how it is put into practice locally. A community police liaison officer regularly visits the home to talk to the young people and staff about their role and involvement with the home. Although young people who go absent without permission are always seen as being safe and well by the police on their return they do not routinely have contact with any other person independent of the home to explain their actions, in accordance with protocols.

The use of sanctions, by staff at the home, are realistic and specific to individual behaviour. This helps young people to understand the consequences of their actions. Young people are taught that the few boundaries and rules that are in place are there to ensure they are kept safe and well. Young people are asked to sign all records relating to the use of sanctions and physical restraint.

The use of restraint used within this home is low and is only applied when young people are likely to hurt themselves. Staff receive annual refresher training on the safe use of physical intervention techniques, but generally they will rely upon their positive, supportive relationships with the young people to diffuse difficult situations. In their responses one young person confirmed that staff followed the rules concerning the application of physical restraint and another said, 'the staff members are understanding and the rules are good by using positive rewards'.

All aspects of health and safety and environmental health matters are extremely well

promoted by the home. Fire safety precautions are effective and drills are regular with young people complying with safe evacuation procedures. A fire risk assessment is annually updated and signed off as effective by the local fire authority. Electrical and gas installations are regularly serviced and harmful substances are kept securely stored. These measures help keep young people physically safe from potential harm

The recruitment and selection of people working at the home follows robust company procedures and checks, that ensure young people are looked after by safe adults. The home's manager is vigilant in ensuring that all appointed staff possess the relevant skills, competencies and qualifications to meet the needs of looked after young people. Appropriately vigorous systems are in place to ensure that all visitors to the home are suitably checked and supervised while on the premises. This diligence ensures young people are kept safe and effectively protected.

Leadership and management

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

The leadership and management of this home are effective in providing difficult to place young people with a positive experience while keeping them safe in a community setting.

Young people live in a home that is very efficiently managed and promotes their safety, integration and best interests. The home meets the aims of its Statement of Purpose comprehensively and young people, families and social workers are very clear about the services and support the home provides by accessing this document. The young person's guide is age appropriate and readable, delivering useful information and illustrations of what the home provides.

Staff are provided with a comprehensive, well organised training programme which enables them to increase their knowledge and develop practical skills for working with particularly challenging young people. Staff confirm that their manager and deputy manager consistently provide a high level of support and guidance which helps them to understand and develop strategies for working with young people effectively. Professional development is regularly reviewed during supervision and appraisal meetings. A member of staff said, 'The manager is great. She knows all about the young people and is able to give us guidance and help in how we work with them.'

Staffing levels at the home effectively meet the needs of the young people and young people have one-to-one staffing at all times assisted by a teacher, cook and a member of support staff. Young people know that staff are always available when they want to talk to them or require help for any aspect of their care. The staff team is very competent and actively demonstrate their skills, experience and enthusiasm. This helps them develop a rapport with young people. All established staff hold a relevant qualification for working with young people.

The Registered Manager uses reflective practice effectively and draws upon feedback

provided by the views of young people, staff and social workers. In house, detailed monitoring of the quality of care is used to inform and improve the service provided, to ensure young people are kept as safe as possible while being assisted to achieve positive outcomes irrespective of their low starting points. A social worker summarised the home by saying that, 'in very difficult circumstances it is doing a good job; the manager has an appropriate management style that engages with young people very well and that there is a very communicative staff team; I am very happy with the service received from the placement and believe it offers value for money.'

The homes ethos is one of sustained improvement based on previous performance and the progress being made by young people. The manager presents a clear and realistic understanding of the strengths of the service and those practical areas for future development. All previous actions and recommendations have been appropriately met by the homes manager. These related to how the education of young people has been promoted and by ensuring that all staff have been trained in techniques of physical restraint.

The home's written records are securely stored and provide a comprehensive but practical picture of individual young people's needs, development and progress. Young people's records contain up-to-date information about them, including the relevant documents from placing authorities. The manager is proactive in following up any administrative shortfalls.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.