

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	18/12/2013
Inspector	Dawn Bennett
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	19/02/2013
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This home is registered to accommodate up to three young people of either gender with emotional and behavioural difficulties. The service is owned by a private company.

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**.

Overall this is a good home. Outcomes for young people are adequate. In most areas young people's progress is good. This judgement is specifically linked to aspects of some young people's educational progress. The staff team have quickly reacted where education placements have not been put in place by a placing authority or where young people have struggled in a mainstream college environment. They have ensured the young people remain educationally focused and have quickly found new educational placements or alternative college placements to ensure the period of time where there is non-attendance is minimal. The quality of care provided by the staff team during this time has been good. They have ensured young people's days remain structured and focused based upon their age and educational need. One requirement and one recommendation have been made to ensure young people's education needs are met to reach their full potential.

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Safeguarding and leadership and management are good. There is an established Registered Manager and staff team whose key strengths are partnership work with other agencies and families.

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
18 (2001)	ensure the educational achievement of children accommodated in the home is promoted, in particular by ensuring that the routine of the home is organised so as to further children's participation in education, including regular attendance at school and college (Reg 18 (1) (b))	31/01/2014

Recommendations

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

- ensure staff are provided with information and training so that they fully understand the particular challenges faced by looked after children in fulfilling their maximum educational potential (Volume 5 2.121)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **adequate**.

Young people's educational progress is adequate. Some young people successfully completed their school education this year. They achieved most of their educational targets and celebrated their results with staff. New college placements were in place but have not been successful sustained by the young people. Young people struggled with the mainstream college environments after attending small specialist school provisions. However staff have supported the young people to maintain routines, attend appointments and work with partnership agencies. As a result new college placements have been identified for January 2014. While waiting for these new college placements to begin one young person has undertaken some voluntary work. Another young person has been applying for part time work.

Another young person was placed at the home without an educational placement. For the few weeks before the Christmas break the staff have put in place a timetable of educational tasks and activities while the Registered Manager liaises with the placing authority to ensure an educational placement is in place by January 2014.

Young people are in good physical health and their emotional health is promoted at all times. Staff ensure that all health needs are properly assessed and visits with the doctor, dentist and optician are well planned, taking place on a regular basis. Young people lead healthy lifestyles and enjoy a wide range of exercise, including martial

arts and walking. Young people also continue to enjoy a diverse range of healthy, nutritious meals, which reinforces this lifestyle. As a result of the healthy choices and wide range of opportunities young people receive at this home, they are experiencing personal successes that build their self-esteem and sense of self.

Young people are active members of their local community, have fun and enjoy themselves. They are also active members of the household. They are encouraged to develop themselves as individuals. They pursue and develop leisure interests, hobbies and friendships. As well as activities led by staff some young people pursue their own interests and activities. They are members of community based groups and clubs and have networks of friends. As well as weekly activities the staff team ensure young people have special trips and activities to look forward to. For example, two young people went on a summer holiday this year to a caravan site attached to a lake with fishing rights. The whole house had recently successfully organised and hosted their annual Christmas party involving their families, staff, social workers and friends.

Young people are confident about themselves and are therefore able to raise concerns and discuss any worries. They have learnt these skills because staff listen to them and where possible address issues raised. Where they cannot solve problems they explain to young people why not.

Young people are actively involved in the development of the house and are very proud of their home. Key worker sessions and young people's meetings are used to good effect to plan and discuss weekly events. They are also used to plan and organise special events. For example, a coffee morning was recently held at the house to raise money for a cancer research charity. All the young people and staff were involved taking invites to family members and neighbours, baking cakes and hosting the event. They raised £140 and received positive compliments from all those involved.

Quality of care

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

The staff team have excellent knowledge of each young person. Key workers spend a lot of time getting to know and supporting their key young person. Stable relationships are built up through regular time spent together discussing topics and going out. They take a lead on liaising with parents and placing authorities. They also overview paperwork, go to reviews and all appointments with their key young person.

The work the staff team have put into the young people achieving stable successful placements has resulted in increased choices and opportunities. For example, young people go on an annual holiday, some attend social clubs in the local community, some have networks of friends with whom they stay over and some have increased family contact.

The promotion of constructive contact with family and friends is a key strength of this home. Young people acknowledge the lengths managers and staff go, to ensure the involvement of family members, not only in their day-to-day lives but also in key events. Staff are creative and flexible when supporting transport, organising contact visits and promoting positive relationships. Constructive work is also undertaken to help young people explore and understand family dynamics and relationships. Also to make their own arrangements and public transport to and from contacts.

The procedures and practice for supporting young people to move into and leave the home are good. They provide staff with clear guidance and practical options that ensure the most appropriate and sensitive approach can be implemented for each individual young person depending upon their circumstance. Prior to arriving at a home, detailed information is gathered from the placing authority and previous placements. This information is used by staff to establish initial strong boundaries that ensure young people feel and are kept safe. These are regularly reviewed and modified through the constant review of young people's progress in relation to their placement plans. Young people already living in the home are considered and involved in the process. One young person stated: 'The staff involved us in the admission of the new young person. This was really important as it made him feel welcome. We have helped him settle in and are positive role models, helping him with the routine of the home.'

The importance of young people's education and future employment is promoted at all times. The staff team support and celebrate success. However, they would benefit from some training that would increase their understanding of the educational terms and systems used which would reinforce their awareness of indicators of normal or delayed educational development.

Where young people are placed at the home and are not on school roll the staff team work closely with the placing authority so that full time education is quickly resumed. Staff also effectively help young people who have not succeeded educationally or who have drifted off track. They provide alternative daily routines and structures. They work with partner agencies and have clear expectations that young people will re-engage and find either an educational or employment route that is right for them. One young person stated: 'They are very supportive but they will also challenge you if they think you could do better. Since stopping college they haven't let me sit around doing nothing. They have made me think about what I want to do in the future and how I am going to get there. This has made me realise that I need to try another college course and maybe this time it will be the right one for me.'

The home environment is very personalised and the young people and staff are very proud of it. It is fun, bright, welcoming and full of photos of happy memories. Each young person's bedroom is individual and personal to them. Young people are genuinely interested in developing their space and enjoy painting, hanging wallpaper and thinking up new ideas. The majority of rooms are not just painted. They have 'feature' walls of wallpaper that add character and within the bedrooms link to interests and personalities of the young people. There is a development plan that

details refurbishment and decoration with clear timescales for completion.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people's safety and well being is promoted at all times and young people are protected from any significant harm. Young people feel safe. They understand how to protect themselves. The staff team and young people have honest, healthy discussions about the importance for young people to become independent but to be responsible and keep themselves safe.

There are a range of safeguarding policies and procedures that underpin good quality staff training. All safeguarding concerns are correctly referred in a timely manner. Where appropriate disciplinary procedures are followed. The staff team proactively work with partnership agencies to report any concerns in line with interagency protocols, for example, missing from home incidents. They attend meetings and co-ordinate strategies agreed to ensure young people are working to specific plans that promote their rights whilst ensuring their well being. These strategies have positive outcomes with incidents significantly reducing.

The Registered Manager and staff team place a strong value on making positive relationships with young people. This successfully promotes a culture of openness and trust. Staff are very aware of and alert to any signs that indicate a young person is in any way at risk. They work with young people to help them understand the implications and dangers involved in any risk taking behaviours and make them aware of how to seek help. The culture of the home reinforces a clear expectation of respectful relationships. For example, any form of discriminatory or bullying language or behaviour is quickly addressed and then explored through key worker sessions.

As well as having a good understanding of individual's needs, the staff team have a clear understanding of the group's dynamics. They are skilled at managing the environment and diverting attentions through thorough shift planning. Staff review how each young person is coping through daily discussions. This enables them to plan appropriate activities that the young person can succeed at therefore raising moral and self-esteem. As a result there are very low levels of inappropriate behaviour. Those issues that do arise are quickly addressed through discussions and age appropriate consequences. Strategies are specific to individual young people and support them to understand their emotions and develop the language and skills to express their views appropriately and reduce their incidents of inappropriate behaviour.

Staying safe is promoted at all times through discussion and positive role modelling by staff. This is also balanced by good corporate parenting and proportionate risk assessments. For example, staff are encouraging young people to use public transport. They are learning to read timetables, plan routes and travel to and from agreed activities.

Young people's safety is further promoted by risk assessments. They are regularly reviewed and audited by the home. All staff are appropriately trained in health and safety matters including first aid and fire awareness. Fire safety procedures and the appropriate records of equipment tests and fire drills are well maintained.

Leadership and management

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

This home was judged to be making good progress at the last interim inspection. No requirements or recommendations were set at the last inspection.

The overall ethos, values and principles which play a core part in promoting young people's safety and welfare are clearly set out in the home's Statement of Purpose. There is also a suitable children's guide in place which is given to all young people and helps them understand the care and support they will receive while living at the home.

The Registered Manager is actively involved in the day-to-day operation and life of the home and is a very present role model. All staff are well qualified and have access to mandatory training courses. As a result they are well informed and are skilled in meeting the needs of young people. They also feel well supported by each other and direct line managers. They have regular supervisions, appraisals and staff meetings. This ensures they are well supported and able to raise any issues.

As well as mandatory training run by the company, the Registered Manager has organised training specific to her staff team's needs. This has included courses on autism, solvent and alcohol abuse and attachment disorder.

There are a range of quality assurance tools in place within the home that ensure regular monitoring of outcomes for young people and quality of care. The home's development plan is well established and looks at areas within the home that can be further developed to ensure standards and quality continue to be raised.

Staff are supported and guided to fulfil their roles and provide a good quality service to young people. Records are clear, up-to-date and stored securely, and contribute to an understanding of the young people's lives. All significant events relating to the protection of young people accommodated in the home are notified by the registered person of the home to the appropriate authorities and appropriate action is taken following the incident.

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.