

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC020611
Inspection date	21/06/2011
Inspector	David Morgan
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	18/01/2011
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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 is a dual-site children's home in which the main house can accommodate three young people and the satellite property can accommodate an additional young person, giving a total for the registration of four young people aged between eight and 17 years of age.

Both the main house and the satellite home are located in a small village on the outskirts of a small market town. The main house is a detached family house with a sizeable garden. The satellite home is a two bedded detached cottage with a large garden. Both homes provide individual bedrooms and have communal space downstairs. They have individual Statement of Purposes but share common policies and procedures. Both houses draw staff from a team based at the main house.

Overall effectiveness

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

Young people make satisfactory progress in most respects. They benefit from an experienced staff team and a comfortable environment. Young people have easy access to a range of recreational, social and sporting activities and there are regular bus services available to the nearby town, enabling young people, where appropriate, to develop their independence skills. Clear attention is paid to each young person's individual needs and opportunities are taken to improve their educational outcomes and personal skills. Young people feel safe and are able to express their views openly. Improvements are necessary to both buildings to ensure young people benefit from a suitable standard. Attention is required to fire drills to ensure they are as effective as possible. Staff appraisals are not up to date in some cases, which means their personal development plans have lapsed. The development plan for the service is also not up to date and provides only limited evidence of the capacity for improvement. Certain improvements are also necessary to care practices, such as behaviour management strategies; management of clothing allowances and feedback to young people after complaints have been made.

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
23	ensure all parts of the home to which children have access are	25/07/2011

(2001)	so far as reasonably practicable free from hazards to their health or safety, with regard to kitchen work surfaces and windows on the first floors (Regulation 23(a))	
27 (2001)	ensure that all staff receive appropriate appraisals (Regulation 27(4)(b))	26/09/2011
31 (2001)	ensure the premises are reasonably decorated and maintained (Regulation 31(2)(e))	25/07/2011
32 (2001)	ensure, by means of fire drills and practices at suitable intervals, that the persons working in the home and, so far as practicable, children accommodated there, are aware of the procedure to be followed in case of fire, with regard to using different scenarios (Regulation 32(1)(e))	25/07/2011
34 (2001)	ensure there is a system for improving the quality of care provided in the children's home, with regard to having a suitable development plan. (Regulation 34(1)(b))	25/07/2011

Recommendations

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

- ensure that children receive prompt feedback on any concerns or complaints raised and are kept informed of progress (NMS 1.6)
- ensure that children's behavioural needs as set out in their care plan are met (NMS 3.7)
- ensure that children exercise choice and independence in the clothes and personal requisites that they buy and that reasonable limits are set to ensure essential not only desirable items of clothing are obtained when required (NMS 2.5)
- ensure the home provides a comfortable and homely environment and is well maintained and decorated on both sites (NMS 10.3)
- ensure the manager enrolls on a management training course. (NMS 14.3)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people benefit from satisfactory attention to their needs and wishes. There is close attention to them in terms of good staffing levels, personal space and privacy. This means that they learn from positive and appropriate role-modelling by male and female staff. Cultural and religious needs are addressed appropriately and staff engage young people in supportive discussions about issues of social diversity. Diets are adjusted to cater for special requirements and take into account each young

person's wishes. There are regular opportunities for young people to learn basic cooking skills, which is an important part of their preparation for independence. Young people also receive regular amounts of money for clothing but these are not controlled in a suitable way in every case. This means that the opportunities to budget appropriately are not used sufficiently well.

Young people benefit from sound attention to their health and educational needs. Challenges to the provision of suitable arrangements are addressed and kept under review. Staff ensure that young people are routinely encouraged to make the best use of the extensive opportunities available to them. Such opportunities extend to a wide range of leisure activities in which young people learn new skills and take appropriate risks. This positive approach encourages and rewards constructive behaviour in young people. Young people are only subjected to sanctions in appropriate circumstances and such occasions are carefully monitored. Staff ensure that young people have opportunities to learn from such events and are rewarded for positive behaviour.

Quality of care

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

Staff make suitable efforts all the time to develop constructive relationships and succeed to a large extent. This has a positive effect on the atmosphere in the home and allows young people to contribute to the home's operation. Risks to young people such as aggressive behaviour and being absent without authority are discussed in detail with them and are minimised. Challenges posed by young people are addressed in a professional manner.

Young people are fully aware of their rights, including how to complain. Such concerns are treated seriously and investigated. However, it is not always clear that young people receive feedback on their concerns. This means the complaints procedure is less effective than necessary.

Staff maintain adequate plans for the care of each young person and young people are involved in their preparation and review. Plans adequately take into account any religious and cultural needs of young people. Such plans include positive handling plans, which benefit from input from a therapist. However, these are not always signed-off by staff and are not sufficiently detailed to meet the complex needs of each young person. This contributes to the breakdown in behaviour from time to time.

Overall, the home is not adequately maintained. The main site is mainly adequately presented. However, externally, the gardens are not sufficiently well presented. Inside, for example, the upstairs lounge requires attention to make it sufficiently homely and other areas require improvement. Certain windows are not restricted in how far they can be opened and provide a safety hazard. A window is at tripping height and has no safety measures in place to prevent a young person falling through.

The satellite home is not suitable for use at present as it poses hygiene issues, has safety shortfalls, and is not suitably presented either inside or outside. These matters indicate a lack of an effective management strategy.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

There are good arrangements to keep young people safe. Risks are clearly identified and staff have a thorough knowledge of child protection matters. There are useful links with other agencies, such as the police, and any investigations are handled efficiently. Use of restraint is avoided and any occurrences are monitored. On the rare occasions when young people do not return at the agreed time, they return under their own volition without fear of repercussions.

With the exception of the matters raised above, the properties provide appropriate levels of safety. This is achieved by regular checks and servicing of equipment. Staff have a good knowledge of the range of safety issues involved in children's homes. Fire safety checks occur regularly too. However, fire drills do not sufficiently test the understanding of staff as required by the service's policy. This increases the risk of harm occurring in the event of an actual emergency.

Leadership and management

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

The management team demonstrate a reasonable level of capacity to improve the service. Appropriate information is obtained through regular monitoring checks. However, the home's development plan does not show the matters identified by the new manager or how these will be implemented, for example, regarding the physical environment. This lack of planning means that improvements are less likely to occur.

Good levels of qualified, trained and competent staff are engaged at the home although most are new to the home. Appropriate notifications are made to other agencies and staff understand the whistle-blowing policy. This means that important issues are shared with other professionals as soon as possible. A system of annual appraisals is in place for staff but has not been implemented for all of them. As a result, professional development plans are not in place for all staff. This is an important way of improving the skills of staff and ensuring they operate to a high level. The manager does not yet have a management qualification as required by regulations.

Equality and diversity practice is **satisfactory**.