

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Sonya Robinson
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Date of last inspection	25/01/2012
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home is owned by a voluntary organisation and young people who access this service can be aged between 10 and 17 years old. The home provides accommodation for a maximum of three young people with emotional or behavioural difficulties.

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 **adequate**.

This home provides a safe and supportive environment. Young people are protected from harm, with mechanisms in place to keep them safe. Young people say they feel safe living in this home. Young people are involved in discussion and decision-making about most aspects of their care and support including, how they spend their spare time and their future plans. Their views are respected.

Young people's needs are clearly identified and placement plans are effectively put into practice. Staff work in a co-ordinated and organised way with young people, their families and professionals from other agencies to ensure that young people continue to get the right support.

Staff recognise young people as individuals with different needs, abilities, backgrounds, interests and views. They ensure that young people receive an individual service that is designed to meet their personal needs. Staff know the young people and their backgrounds well, enabling them to meet young people's needs. Staff value the rights of individuals to be different and promote respect and dignity.

Managers know and understand the strengths and weaknesses of the home and have a development plan in place to further improve the quality of care and outcomes for young people.

There are four requirements and two recommendations highlighted within this

report. These relate to the records kept in relation to medication and meals served. Also about updating information such as the complaints policy, Statement of Purpose and the young person's guide. Good practice recommendations relate to young people's views being regularly noted within the minutes of young people's meetings and the need for a review of young people's pocket money.

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
13 (2001)	ensure food is properly prepared, wholesome and nutritious, and specifically that it is consistently of a good quality and that it meets individual and cultural tastes (Regulation 13 (1) (a) (i-iv))	31/07/2012
24 (2001)	ensure that the written procedure for considering complaints made by or on behalf of children accommodated in the home shall provide an opportunity for informal resolution and specifically the acceptance of verbal complaints (Regulation 24 (2) (a))	31/07/2012
21 (2001)	ensure there are suitable arrangements for the recording, handling, safekeeping, safe administration and disposal of any medicine received into the children's home (Regulation 21 (1))	13/06/2012
5 (2001)	update and revise the Statement of Purpose and the children's guide. (Regulation 5 (a) (c))	31/07/2012

Recommendations

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

- ensure that all children communicate their views on all aspects of their care and support, for example through young people's meetings (NMS 1.3)
- ensure that children receive a personal allowance appropriate to their age and understanding that is consistent with their placement plan. (NMS 2.7)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people generally speak positively about staff, recognising the individual

support given to them. Any medical, religious and cultural needs a young person may have are addressed. Young people are often initially supported in the community by staff, to promote some positive engagement and to help them reintegrate back into society.

Young people are registered with local health service providers, such as doctors and dentists and also have access to more specialised medical input if required. Young people make good use of the support and advice given by the nurse who is on site. As a result young people each have an up-to-date health plan that includes their medical history and identifies any specific needs. Statutory health assessments take place, assisted by the links developed with the local children's services.

Young people say that while they enjoy some of the food provided, it is not of a consistently good quality, nor does it fully reflect their tastes and preferences. This view is supported by the inspection findings. This identified that while young people regularly influence changes to the menu plan, these are not consistently noted within young people's meetings or menus. Young people's meetings are also not consistently undertaken as young people sometimes refuse to attend.

Young people are supported in their education to learn, achieve and to progress in a similar way to all other young people in society. Some young people have missed periods of education throughout their childhood. On-site education enables young people to learn at their own pace. Young people are making satisfactory progress in this area.

Young people's care is reviewed on a regular basis with their social workers, in order to make placement plans meaningful. Young people are supported by staff to sustain contact with other people important in their lives, without compromising necessary safeguards.

Young people receive regular pocket money, however it has been acknowledged by the Registered Manager that this could be increased with opportunities to earn extra for positive engagement and behaviour. Young people do not currently take sufficient responsibility for themselves, given their age and understanding. Young people learn skills such as, planning meals and undertaking some household tasks. In addition, they are encouraged to develop their personal care. This helps young people prepare for adult life.

Quality of care

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

Staff provide consistent boundaries and young people know what is expected of them and what is unacceptable. Young people have a say in their care and about the way in which the home is run, through, for example, direct work with individual staff members. The home makes sure that young people have access to information about their rights and how to deal with their concerns through the complaints procedure. Young people know how to make a complaint if they are unhappy.

However, there is no provision within the complaints policy for young people to make verbal complaints. The organisation provides young people with access to an independent advocate who they see on a regular basis. This provides an extra source of support and guidance for the young people.

Staff promote healthy lifestyles in a variety of ways. Young people have written placement plans identifying their needs and outlining the arrangements for meeting them. Their health needs are met as outlined with n their placement plans and through regular access to health professionals.

There are facilities for the staff to administer medications appropriately and there is a lockable cabinet available to ensure that medication can be stored securely. All of the staff receive training in administration of medications and first aid. However, there are errors within the medicine administration records and a lack of consistency in explaining why a particular medication might not be given. Due to the nature of the medication, this has not impacted negatively on the health of young people.

Young people engage in some activities and individual interests. For example, individuals have opportunity to observe and interact with the local wildlife such as feeding the birds and rabbits. They also go to the cinema and shopping centres with staff. Staff encourage young people to attend age-appropriate festivals and religious events are also celebrated.

Staff within the home work closely with the staff from the on-site school. This helps young people to access education and vocational training suitable to their needs. The home provides suitable study space, which means that young people's educational needs are supported within the home environment.

The house is located on the site of a secure estate but this home is not a secure home and offers open accommodation. The home is independently staffed and equipped and has its own gardens and summerhouse. Young people are mainly placed following a period in the secure home on site and placements are arranged generally on a short-term transitional basis. The purpose of the home is to provide a more focused opportunity and a stepping stone from a secure environment in preparation for their next placement in an open setting. The use of this house can also allow additional opportunities for increased levels of semi-independent living within a domestic setting.

Young people live in a location in reach of schools, leisure facilities, public transport and shops that are important for their full development. The size, layout and design of the accommodation meet young people's needs. The home has a regular maintenance programme in place and young people have taken to opportunity to personalise their bedrooms in accordance with their own preferences and interests.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people live in a safe environment where they are protected from harm and have a sense of safety and well-being. Young people say they feel safe here.

Young people are protected as staff have an excellent understanding of the home's safeguarding procedures and the action to take should they have concerns regarding a young person's safety or well-being. Young people identify staff they can talk to about issues that are concerning them. Staff take effective action in response to information provided by young people, which ensures their continued safety.

Staff provide young people with good advice regarding their personal safety, including potentially inappropriate friendships and relationships. This enables young people to consider the risks and make informed choices about who they associate with. Staff work very well with social workers and other professionals to help keep young people safe. Placing social workers say that staff are very good at keeping them informed about their young people.

Staff are aware of young people's vulnerability and the risks they face in the community. They use clear, detailed risk assessments to help protect young people from harm. Staff successfully balance the need for protection versus enabling young people to take reasonable risks as part of their independence and development. For example, they encourage young people to remain in mobile phone contact when they are out in the community.

There has been a decrease in the number of incidents of young people going missing and there is a clear protocol in place with the police should this occur. Staff actively search for young people as well as working positively with the police.

Positive behaviour is actively promoted. Staff praise appropriate behaviour and this encourages young people to manage their behaviour better. The use of sanctions is minimal. As a consequence, young people are showing increasing maturity to different situations and are much more able to deal with difficult situations in a constructive manner.

Young people live in a physically safe environment. They are protected by a comprehensive range of health and safety procedures, risk assessments and checks. Staff carry out regular safety checks such as fire drills to ensure the premises are safe.

Recruitment and selection procedures are robust. Staff are appropriately vetted for their suitability to work with young people prior to commencing work. All visitors to the home are required to provide proof of identity, sign in and out of the home and are appropriately supervised. These arrangements mean that young people are protected, as far as possible, from coming into contact with unsafe persons in the home.

Leadership and management

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

The home has a management team who provide leadership and direction to the staff. Young people are familiar with the young person's guide which is given to them when they arrive at the home. This, along with the Statement of Purpose outlines the aims and objectives of the home, including specifying the age range of young people being cared for, which is between 10 and 17 years. Full information is not available as both of these documents are slightly outdated and they do not reflect the new children's legislation or recent good practice guidance. For example young people do not have written information about how to access to Ofsted. This is compensated for by the information available to them about how to access other advocacy services.

At the last inspection in January 2012 two requirements were made. Both of these were in relation to monitoring. Since the last inspection the home has taken steps to obtain feedback from young people, staff and some visitors. They are also looking at how they can obtain feedback from parents and others involved in the young people's lives, though this is still at an early stage. This information is used within regular monthly reports which are completed by independent visitors, on behalf of the organisation, in order to assess the quality of care provided. Also, since the last inspection Ofsted has received a six month review of the quality of care completed by the Registered Manager. The review notes the outcomes and achievements of the young people. The home has an annual development plan. This also identifies future action to be taken to address the strengths and weaknesses of the home.

Young people are looked after by a fully qualified team of staff who have a range of skills and experience. Staff have access to training, including, missing from care, safeguarding and child sexual exploitation. This provides additional safeguards for the young people placed. Staff say they work well as a team and that the young people are central to everything that they do. Team meetings take place on a regular basis and this means that staff are well informed about the young people's progress and any emerging issues.

There are sufficient staff on duty at all times to meet the needs of the young people. The staff team provides a balance of male and female staff who are positive role models. Young people's records are organised and contain up-to-date information about them, including relevant documents from placing authorities. This allows tracking of decisions that have been made. There are systems in place to notify Ofsted of any significant issues that may occur within the home or with regards to the young person placed, allowing consideration of any serious incidents that take place. Professionals who work with this home speak positively about their working relationship with the staff and management of the home.

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.