

## Inspection report for children's home

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| <b>Unique reference number</b> | SC023646        |
| <b>Inspection date</b>         | 01/08/2012      |
| <b>Inspector</b>               | Helen Lee       |
| <b>Type of inspection</b>      | Full            |
| <b>Provision subtype</b>       | Children's home |

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| <b>Date of last inspection</b> | 19/03/2012 |
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## Service information

### Brief description of the service

This children's home is privately run. It is registered to accommodate and provide care for up to 8 young people aged between 11 and 17 years.

### 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**.

The outcomes for young people are satisfactory. For a few young people limited progress is being made in relation to some aspects of their welfare and development. Due to the frequent occurrences of being absent or socialising with peers a small number of young people have less opportunity to benefit from staff support. However, other young people are engaging with the home to secure themselves more positive outcomes.

There are placement plans in place to address any identified needs. Further improvements are needed to keep these up to date. However, the home effectively provides personalised and individual care. As one young person stated, 'even our toiletries are individual to ensure we don't all smell the same and stay ourselves.' Key working sessions are meaningful and are used to target areas of need. A particular strength of the home is the involvement of young people in leisure activities and the planning of these. Young people are happy with their placements and appreciate the help and support they receive.

Young people are adequately safeguarded through strong links with external agencies such as health and the local police. While staff work hard to minimise the occurrences of young people going missing the results are inconsistently effective. Recruitment processes need improvement to ensure that the home evidences robust vetting procedures.

The manager is experienced and this benefits the young people. There were seven requirements made to help improve the quality of care; and five recommendations

were made to improve good practice. These weaknesses can be clearly identified within the body of the report.

## 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   |
|---------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| 4<br>(2001)   | include in the Statement of Purpose the matters listed in Schedule 1. In particular this refers to point 19; A description of any electronic or mechanical means of surveillance of children which any be used in the children's home (Regulation 4 (1))                                                            | 31/08/2012 |
| 22<br>(2001)  | ensure that the child's placing authority consents to and that provision is made in the child's placement plan regarding the use of any electronic or mechanical monitoring devices (Regulation 22 (1) (a) (b))                                                                                                     | 31/08/2012 |
| 26<br>(2001)  | ensure that full and satisfactory information is available in relation to employed persons of the home in respect of Schedule 2 (Regulation 26 (3) (d))                                                                                                                                                             | 01/10/2012 |
| 27<br>(2001)  | ensure that all persons employed receive appropriate training and supervision (Regulation 27 (4))                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | 01/10/2012 |
| 17B<br>(2001) | ensure that within 24 hours a written record is made in a volume kept for the purpose and shall include, the times of the measure, the effectiveness and any consequences of the use of the measure and confirmation that the person authorised has spoken to the child concerned (Regulation 17 B (3) (d) (f) (h)) | 31/08/2012 |
| 17B<br>(2001) | ensure the record of restraint includes the details of any methods used to avoid the need to use that measure (Regulation 17 B (4) (b))                                                                                                                                                                             | 31/08/2012 |
| 29<br>(2001)  | maintain in the children's home the records specified in Schedule 4 and ensure that they are kept up to date, in particular the children's register. (Regulation 29 (1))                                                                                                                                            | 31/08/2012 |

### Recommendations

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

- ensure that staff meet children's individual needs as set out in the child's placement plan (NMS 2.3)

- ensure that any risk reduction doesn't lead to an institutional feel (NMS 10.3)
- involve young people in the recruitment of staff in the home, wherever practicable (NMS 16.8)
- ensure that staff understand what decisions about contact are delegated to them, in line with the child's care and placement plans (NMS 9.7)
- ensure that the registered person has a written development plan, reviewed annually, which identifies any planned changes or confirms the continuation of the home's current operation and resource. (NMS 15.2)

## Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people make satisfactory progress in relation to their starting point. One social worker states, 'the young person is progressing slowly which is dependent upon their behaviour, they are being offered so much but the young person is not engaging.' Although staff are knowledgeable young people do not benefit from their histories and progress being recorded. Young people are encouraged to make sense of their past experiences and they engage in valid discussions during key working sessions. For example, they look at faiths, beliefs and value systems. Appropriate external support is sought to help them when this process brings difficulties and challenges. They stand to benefit from satisfactory outcomes because of this approach.

Generally young people enjoy good physical health. For example, one young person has benefitted from overcoming a fear of the dentist with staff support. Medical histories are chased and staff are fully aware of any current and on-going health concerns. Young people benefit from staff adopting an educative approach. Good links are being maintained with external agencies, such as sexual health services. However, young people do not always make the desired choices in terms of looking after their own health. For example, there is a lack of decreasing risk taking behaviours such as smoking and drug use.

While staff support and encourage school or college attendance the results are inconsistent. Young people benefit from good educational achievement in line with their peers or from gaining vocational certificates and awards from alternative educational programmes. The expected educational progress for a number of young people is satisfactory and takes into account any lack of schooling prior to admission as well as the low level of attendance.

Young people benefit from opportunities to contribute to the home and within the community have been involved with various charities and work experience ventures.

Young people enjoy positive contact with those who are important to them. Staff generally facilitate such arrangements in accordance with placing authority agreements. However, there are occasions where this is not the case. Parents, relatives and friends are encouraged to maintain positive relationships with the

young people. Good social networks are being developed and maintained. Staff members are sensitive and empathic with regards to friendships and social needs. Young people enjoy spending time outside of the home with their friends. For a small number of young people this is a fairly considerable amount of time. This results in reduced engagement with staff in order to enable the home's plans and strategies to positively impact on their outcomes.

Staff support young people to develop self-care skills from the point they move in, such as getting involved in cooking and managing their own laundry. Young people benefit from a wide range of strategies to ensure that they acquire practical and life skills to prepare them for the move to independence. For example, help with setting up bank accounts and help with managing and preparing for change. As young people get older an independence plan is put in place which is tailored to link to any pathway plan developed by the placing authority.

### **Quality of care**

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

Young people benefit from care planning which outlines their assessed and agreed needs. However, several of the plans are out of date and do not sufficiently highlight young people's cultural needs.

Young people and staff enjoy positive relationships with each other. The home engenders a 'sibling' type of relationship between the young people. Young people do have key workers; however, they also enjoy close relationships with all the staff. Young people learn to develop appropriate social skills. One young person states, 'it is good here if you want to be helped.' Effective role modelling plays an important part in learning to behave appropriately and respectfully. The majority of staff are confident in managing the issues and dynamics which are sometimes presented by a mixed group of young people.

Most young people understand their wishes may not always be met. Staff take time to explain the reasons why, using language and rationale which is appropriate for the individual. Complaints processes are clear, readily available and understood. Young people say the staff are very approachable. They routinely seek out their key workers, as well as the manager and confirm they can easily contact their own family members and social workers in private. Such factors create an open and transparent environment, within which young people understand and value their rights to be heard.

Young people are encouraged to take responsibility for their own health needs as is appropriate to their age and understanding. Young people benefit from staff working very hard to encourage them to make safe and appropriate choices, for example regarding sexual health. When necessary, referrals are made to external health services for promoting and supporting individual's mental and emotional well-being. Although not all young people have engaged with these, this ensures that young people can access the services and support that they need.

The home provides all of the young people with a wide and varied range of educational opportunities including: mainstream schools, the organisation's own registered provision, home tutoring arrangements and local private resources. Responses to presenting needs are creative and personally tailored in order to provide young people with a service that best suits them as individuals.

Young people enjoy a wide range of leisure activities, both within their home and through accessing their local area. These include driving lessons, bike rides, the gym, horse riding and archery. The care planning process actively seeks to discover young peoples' preferred hobbies and interests. Positive behaviour is rewarded through activity provision and young people are provided with opportunities to enjoy group, as well as individual activities.

### **Safeguarding children and young people**

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

Young people say they feel safe within their home. Staff receive the training and guidance they need in order to protect young people from possible sources of harm, neglect and abuse. Such topics are covered throughout new staff's induction periods and thereafter. All staff receive regular and on-going safeguarding training. The home's policies and procedures for child protection are congruent with local authority guidance and staff know how to implement these. Young people state that there are no issues with bullying.

Staff implement clear procedural guidance in the event of young people being absent from the home. Local authority and police guidance is followed in practice with the addition of the home's kids in crisis team which is set up to specifically support the young people and the staff through any incidences. Police workers state that there has been a clear reduction for one young person and are extremely positive of the strategies deployed by the home. However, for another young person such incidents have increased. Staff are very clear about the reasons for this and are working in partnership with the young person, police and placing authority to set about reducing this. Staff also take proactive measures in securing young people's safe return as quickly as possible. For example, staff maintain regular contact with individuals, as much as they are able to.

Young people understand the rules and behavioural expectations of the home. However, a number of young people feel that there are inconsistencies for example around set meal times. One young person states that 'some staff don't stick to the rules as they don't want to deal with the temper tantrums.' Written records of physical restraint are inconsistently recorded and monitored. Such omissions present the risk of incidents not being sufficiently analysed.

Recruitment processes ensure that Criminal Records Bureau checks are undertaken. However, two staff have commenced their employment before their references were received. As staff were participating in their induction process and did not have direct

contact with young people this did not compromise young people's safety. Additionally not all employment gaps were fully evidenced or recorded, along with volunteer work with young people cited on application forms not being verified. These omissions demonstrate potential shortfalls in terms of safe recruitment. Additionally, young people state that they would like to be involved in the recruitment of staff.

The building is secure; however, closed circuit television cameras are used internally within the office which is not stated in the Statement of Purpose. Also, the pantry is locked which young people are not happy with. Although door alarms are in place on landing doors this is not provided for in the young people's placement plans, nor is there written consent from all placing authorities.

### **Leadership and management**

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

The home has a permanently employed experienced manager, with two deputy positions. This is changing in line with the new company's policy to one deputy and two seniors. The home has been without a number of senior staff which have been recruited to start in a few weeks. The home does not use volunteers or agency staff and this results in young people being looked after by a consistent team. There were no requirements and recommendations from the previous inspection. The manager undertakes regular monitoring which is supported by the improved regulation 33 monitoring. Improvements such as the increase of activities and staffing ratios are noted as positive changes which have impacted effectively on the young people. However, critical planning of the home in the way of a written development plan is not well developed as it is currently an eight point checklist.

Young people have confidence in their care givers and say, 'this gives me the best start in life now' and 'it's like a family here and it is improving.' Young people feel that staff are available when they want to talk to them or require their help. The staff members all undertake mandatory training in key areas of practice. However, the majority of staff are not equipped with the specific skills and knowledge regarding drug and alcohol use and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, as they have not been provided with training to meet the needs of the young people. Formal supervision of staff is not regular and this includes for new staff. The manager has formally apologised to staff regarding this shortfall. Staff feel adequately supported through more informal routes, such as team meetings and ad hoc discussions.

Although records are stored securely, not all of them are clear, and up-to-date. For example, placement plans, the children's register and the restraint log. The manager is fully aware of her legal duties and responsibilities. All such incidents which meet the criteria for notification are readily communicated to Ofsted and placing authorities in the very best interests of safeguarding the young people at 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.