

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	09/02/2012
Inspector	David Putnam
Type of inspection	Interim
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	19/09/2011
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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 progress made by the provider since the last full inspection, identifies any further strengths, any areas for improvement and makes judgements as outlined in the *Inspection of children's homes – framework for inspection (March 2011)*.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Good progress	The children's home has demonstrated continued improvement in quality of care and outcomes for children and young people and where appropriate has addressed all requirements and the large majority of recommendations that were raised at the previous inspection.
Satisfactory progress	The children's home has maintained quality of care and outcomes for children and young people and where appropriate has addressed all requirements and the majority of recommendations that were raised at the previous inspection.
Inadequate progress	The children's home has failed to address one or more requirements and/or has not met the majority of recommendations and/or the quality of care and outcomes for children and young people have declined since the last full inspection.

Service information

Brief description of the service

This is a privately owned children's home which is registered for up to three young people.

Progress

Since their previous inspection the service is judged to be making **inadequate** progress.

At the last inspection, the home was judged to be good overall. Two requirements and three recommendations were made. The home has addressed the two requirements, but none of the recommendations have been satisfactorily addressed. This results in the judgement of inadequate progress, but additional factors relating to the quality of care and outcomes for young people have also affected this judgment.

The home went through a difficult period following the last inspection. Outcomes for young people declined during this time. The use of drugs and the incidence of criminality increased. The independent reviewing officers (IRO) express concern that young people began using drugs after being placed in the home. Staff are in the process of addressing these problems and are beginning to turn things around. Young people are able to recognise progress they have made. One young person stated they have made improvements around their education saying that previously, 'I had no education. I couldn't do 30 minutes in a classroom. Now I do all day'. Furthermore, they have sat some GCSE papers and will be entered for others. The IRO confirms this information and recognises that despite difficulties, the home has provided stability.

Progress has been made regarding contact with young people and their families. Social workers and IRO's speak positively about the contribution made by staff. Young people say they feel safe in the home and are welcomed when they first arrive. Staff provide welcome packs, including information about the home for young people and familiarise young people with the home and the local area.

Staff say that the offending behaviour of young people is now reducing. They recognise this could be a consequence of the intervention of criminal justice processes including electronic tagging.

One young person said they feel more independent because they cook their own meals and travel to and from education by train on their own. Staff have identified a programme of work to focus on independence skills for all young people. However, little evidence is recorded of work completed. Staff say that young people are resistant, but attempts to work with young people are also not recorded.

Specific areas of change or development for young people are difficult to track as staff do not consistently update individual placement plans and health action plan targets. There is still no development plan in place for the home. Monitoring visits provide robust feedback on the standard of care provided in the home. Although recommendations are made, these are not always addressed effectively or consistently.

Young people's views are no longer sought through group meetings. Records show that the last of these was held four months ago. Individual meetings with key workers are recorded. However, the young people spoken to on inspection were able to identify areas for improvement within the home. This indicates that their ability to influence the running of the home is not as effective as at the last inspection.

Similarly, regular staff meetings are not currently being held. Formal notes of only one meeting exist since the last inspection, nearly five months ago. During this period the staff team has had to respond to difficult and challenging behaviour of young people while there have been several changes of staff. An opportunity to discuss and agree a consistent team approach to young people was missed.

Records show that weekly safety checks fell behind briefly during November 2011, but staff now complete these consistently. These checks contribute to the ongoing health and safety of young people and others in the home. Fire drills are held regularly but these are not always completed at times when young people are present. Records show that during just one of the last three drills, only one young person was present. This will negatively affect the awareness young people have of the procedure to follow in case of fire.

Despite the lack of a formal development plan, managers in the home and the parent organisation are able to identify things the home does well. It is noted that progress has been made in some areas for young people who demonstrate particularly challenging behaviours. However, managers also acknowledge where improvement is required and express commitment to address these shortfalls. The Registered Manager currently undertakes the same role in another home. Senior managers are considering if this is the best model of management for this home in delivering the most effective service for young people.

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
32	ensure, by means of fire drills and practices at suitable	31/03/2012

(2001)	intervals, that the persons working at the home and, so far as practicable, children accommodated there, are aware of the procedure to be followed in case of fire. (Regulation 32 (1)(e))	
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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 that children's health is promoted in accordance with their placement plan, in particular that action taken to address individual health action plan targets is recorded consistently (NMS 6.5)
- ensure young people are supported to develop practical skills, including shopping, buying, cooking and keeping food, washing clothes, personal self care, and personal health care along with other developments in accordance with this standard (NMS 12.1)
- ensure that the registered person has a written development plan, reviewed annually, for the future of the home, either identifying any planned changes in the operation or resources of the service, or confirming the continuation of the home's current operation and resource. (NMS 15.2)
- ensure each child's placement plan is monitored by a key worker within the home who ensures that the requirements of the plan are implemented in the day-to-day care of that child, in particular that action taken to address individual needs of each child is recorded consistently (NMS 25.2)
- improve the way in which children's views, wishes and feelings are acted upon, in the day-to-day running of the home (NMS 1.1)
- ensure all staff's work is consistent with these regulations and national minimum standards, the home's policies and procedures, in particular through implementing regular staff meetings and recording decisions consistently. (NMS 21.3)