

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	David Putnam
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This is a privately owned children's home which is registered for up to three young people with emotional and/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 **good**.

Children and young people benefit from positive relationships with staff who get to know them extremely well. As a result children and young people develop a strong sense of safety. This is reflected in the fact that they rarely go missing. Behaviour is managed sensitively and fairly with limited use of restraint which only happens as a last resort.

Children and young people are directly involved with and influence the plans produced to meet their own care needs. They make positive progress in their development. Health needs are identified and met well. Support from staff and the involvement of health professionals promotes awareness of health risks, including those resulting from smoking and drinking alcohol. Children and young people achieve through the education they receive. This results from significant improvements in their attendance in school following placement in this home. Those who have officially left school remain in education, following courses at a local college.

Leadership and management arrangements remain strong. Despite a delay in forwarding an application to be registered, the current manager demonstrates a clear understanding of the strengths of the home and is already addressing areas that require improvement. Staff describe a sense of direction and purpose resulting from the approach of the manager in the home who is ably supported by senior managers within the organisation.

While reviews of the quality of care are generally good, more could be done to demonstrate how feedback from key stakeholders informs improvements in the

service. Good systems are in place to promote the health and safety of children and young people, but occasionally checks are not completed in line with the organisation's own expectations. The quality and consistency of some record keeping needs to be improved and maintained.

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
34 (2001)	ensure that the system for improving the quality of care provided in the children's home shall provide for consultation with children accommodated in the home, their parents and placing authorities. (Regulation 34(1)(b) and (3))	30/11/2013

Recommendations

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

- ensure all staff's work is consistent with these regulations and national minimum standards, the home's policies and procedures (NMS 21.3)
- ensure there is a system in place to monitor the quality and adequacy of record keeping and take action when needed. (NMS 22.1)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Children and young people engage with therapy, counselling or individual work that is sourced to meet their identified personal need. This supports their ability to understand past experiences, build personal resilience and prepare for their future. For example, children and young people completing anger management courses acknowledge that they still get angry, but say they are better able to control their actions.

Children and young people have their own bicycles or have access to one. They use these to promote their independence in the local area and to improve their fitness through exercise. They comment positively on the quality of the food provided for them. They demonstrate an awareness of the need to eat healthily, but acknowledge that some of their personal choices may not be the healthiest option.

Young people say that they are provided with the necessary information to help them understand the health risks linked to smoking and drinking alcohol. Children and young people request and engage with support from health professionals who help them give up smoking. Young people also say they no longer drink alcohol, whereas they used to drink regularly before being placed in this home. Access to sexual health information is provided by appropriately trained health professionals.

Children and young people benefit from full attendance in school and make demonstrable progress in their education when compared with their starting points. Attendance is invariably at the school provided by the parent company. However, when appropriate, children and young people attend other provision, especially if this promotes continuity upon moving into this home. Those young people who have reached school leaving age continue their education, securing placements at local colleges. Young people undertake vocational courses to train them for the jobs they aspire to. Alternatively they follow courses linked to personal interest and skills that they wish to develop further.

Children and young people benefit from positive experiences of contact with key family members and friends. Parents confirm that staff are welcoming and supportive when they visit and are pro-active in improving the frequency and quality of contact. Young people confirm that they are able to visit friends and on occasion stay overnight with the agreement of staff.

Work to promote young people's independence and self-care skills is identified in individual pathway plans. Staff work with young people to assess personal strengths and areas that require further development. Programmes are devised and followed to meet the needs of each young person. While there is room for improvement in the quality of recording relating to this work, young people remain confident of their own ability.

Quality of care

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

Children and young people are extremely positive about their relationships with staff. Comments include, 'Staff are very supportive and help me to get through life' and 'We have some good staff'. In particular they are positive about the relationships they develop with their key workers. One said, 'My key worker is the best in the world.' As a result, children and young people openly discuss wide ranging issues that affect them directly. One confirmed this saying, 'You can trust all the staff and you can talk to them about anything.' On the whole children and young people get on well with each other. Staff are sensitive to any tensions and difficulties and are both pro-active and effective in managing potential difficulties.

A relatively small, committed staff team get to know the children and young people in their care extremely well. Staff say that they work well together as a team. They are confident in each other's abilities and consider that their joint approach provides

continuity and consistency for the children and young people.

Staff ensure that children and young people are directly involved in the planning of their care. Children and young people are carefully supported by staff to contribute to the decisions that affect them. For example, staff complete consultations with children and young people prior to formal review meetings. Invariably children and young people choose to attend and contribute to these meetings themselves. When this is not possible staff ensure that the child or young person's view is communicated and understood. In planning for young people's care, staff take into account the individual needs of children and young people, relating to their culture, religion and background. For example, religious texts are provided and places of worship in the local area identified. This supports children and young people to continue to pursue their personal faith.

Children and young people are confident that their views count and are considered by managers and staff. They know how to make a complaint, but acknowledge that they do not do this. Children and young people say that they do not complain because if there is a problem, they simply talk to staff about it. This open communication helps children and young people to resolve difficulties swiftly.

The health needs of children and young people are clearly identified and met through detailed health plans. The parent organisation employs a nurse who undertakes thorough assessments and works together with staff to follow up specific areas of need. All children and young people are registered with external health professionals who are consulted when necessary. Arrangements for dealing with medication and any first aid response are both safe and effective.

Staff work in conjunction with other agencies to further promote the welfare of children and young people. Managers in the home and the parent organisation work closely with police in the area, sharing important information. Whenever it is possible, managers ensure that children and young people continue to attend schools where they were placed prior to moving to this home. Although the parent organisation could provide the same level of education, this promotes continuity for children and young people at important stages of their learning. Reports produced by staff following contact visits enable placing social workers to make effective decisions about the necessary level of contact supervision required. At times this results in fundamental changes to the overall care plans of children and young people.

Parents are extremely positive about the quality of care provided in the home and the welcome they receive each time they visit. In describing the home one parent said, 'I wouldn't see it as a children's home. It's homely, inviting and laid out well.' Parents use words such as, 'amazing' and 'brave' to describe the staff in the home.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Children and young people indicate clearly that they feel safe in this home. They do

not identify bullying as a problem in this home. Their sense of safety and well-being is highlighted by the fact that children and young people rarely go missing from the home. Records reflect just two examples since the last inspection. In both cases the child or young person has actually walked out of school and chosen to return to the home. Through their own admission this represents a significantly positive change for children and young people who acknowledge that prior to moving to this home they used to go missing frequently.

Children and young people benefit from a positive working relationship between the parent organisation and local specialist police officers with responsibility for missing children and young people. This relationship is founded upon effective sharing of information. A signed protocol is in place which comprehensively outlines action to be undertaken by staff should a child or young person go missing.

Restraint is used infrequently in this home. When this does occur restraint is only ever used in line with the legislative framework. Children and young people confirm this saying, 'If there's danger [staff] will restrain you. They won't ever restrain you for the fun of it'. Another said that they had never been restrained in the home. Although they had seen others restrained they stated that this was a long time ago. Detailed records relating to all restraints are maintained and monitored by managers. Records include follow up discussion with young people that allows for reflection and learning from previous events.

Robust recruitment, selection and vetting procedures help to safeguard the welfare of children by ensuring unsuitable candidates are filtered out and do not come into contact with children. Recruitment of all new employees is supported by staff at the organisation's head office. Meticulous personnel records are maintained. These are permanently stored at the head office which is just a short distance away from the home. Managers ensure that national minimum standards are met through storing a checklist containing all required information relating to members of staff within the home.

Health and safety processes are addressed through clear policies and procedures prepared by the parent organisation. Suitably qualified and experienced senior managers at the head office take responsibility for devising key processes to safeguard children and young people. Highly personalised assessments identify risks relating to the known behaviours of children and young people. Potential risks are also considered and their likelihood evaluated. Clear plans direct staff how to minimise all risks to children and young people.

Leadership and management

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

The previous Registered Manager resigned from their post on 19 April 2013. The provider met their regulatory responsibilities by informing Ofsted of this and outlining arrangements for managing the service in the interim. On 7 May 2013 the provider notified Ofsted that a new manager had been appointed and gave their details. An

application to be registered has now been received from the new manager. However, this was not received until 11 September 2013, representing a significant delay. In the meantime the current manager has been actively involved in maintaining and further developing the service.

An enthusiastic and motivated staff group is supported effectively through regular supervision of a good standard. The manager agrees individual action plans with each member of staff. These action plans are reviewed regularly to promote personal development and improvements in the service. Staff say that they believe the current manager has provided them with a structure of what they need to be doing and achieving. At the same time they acknowledge that if they have a different opinion the manager is happy to listen and discuss their point of view. Staff also feel well supported by senior managers within the organisation, whom they see as accessible and helpful.

All staff have their performance appraised on an annual basis. Plans to individually develop their knowledge, skills and practice are formulated and agreed. Development needs are collated by the parent organisation to inform comprehensive training programmes that meet personal and organisational requirements. Specialist training is commissioned when necessary to address identified needs.

Relationships with some neighbours have been difficult in the past. Managers within the organisation pro-actively respond to any complaints to bring about prompt resolution. Children and young people acknowledge responsibility if they have acted inappropriately and apologise for their actions when necessary. This mature approach has also led to compliments from other neighbours about the way children and young people conduct themselves.

Regular independent visits to the home each month help identify strengths and areas where the home can improve. The manager completes detailed reviews of the quality of care every three months. These reports are routinely submitted to Ofsted for review. Consultation with children, young people, their parents and placing social workers takes place and is reflected in the manager's reports. However, it is not always apparent how their feedback links to or is reflected in improvements to the service.

Regular health and safety checks of the premises are systematically undertaken by designated staff. However, this inspection highlighted that certain checks scheduled to take place each and every week had not taken place for the preceding three weeks. It is acknowledged that this shortfall had limited impact upon the children and young people placed in the home. However, a recommendation is made to support the manager to ensure that the homes' policies and procedures are adhered to.

In general, records are well written in an open and accessible style. All files are stored securely. However, this inspection identified some inconsistency in recording. In particular the quality of assessments, plans and progress relating to young people's preparation for independence were variable. Some had extremely robust

assessments, but little or no detail relating to work that had been completed or attempted. Others had significant detail of work undertaken but lacked effective assessment of young people's strengths or areas for improvement. As a result individual work lacks direction or purpose. A recommendation is made to ensure the manager monitors the quality and suitability of all records and takes action to improve these when necessary. This shortfall has limited impact upon the children and young people placed in the home and who continue to experience positive outcomes as a result of the good quality of care they receive.

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.