

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC023736
Inspection date	19/09/2011
Inspector	Mark Blesky
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	26/01/2011
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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 private children's home for up to three young people. The home supports and provides care for young people that have experienced disruption in their lives. The services and provisions for the young people are clearly detailed within the homes Statement of Purpose.

Overall effectiveness

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

This home meets young people's needs in most areas to a good standard. Plans are highly individualised and demonstrate that the staff are aware of the more diverse needs of the young people. Equality and diversity are clearly valued in the home and the staff provide effective support for these individual needs.

Young people are encouraged to express their views and wishes and staff promote an open and transparent regime of care and control. Young people are confident and motivated and use the systems and procedures in the home to make their representations and views known. Young people progress well in this home in many areas of their care plans and placement plans.

Relationships are well managed and highly regarded by both staff and the young people. Much effort is made to form and sustain this co-operation. Conduct in the home is generally harmonious and systems of control are not overly punitive. The progress of young people is effectively supported and encouraged as a result of the strength and enduring nature of the relationships in the home.

Young people are kept safe and feel safe as a result of both the trust they have in the staff and the confidence that they have to express any feeling of dissatisfaction. Robust formal systems of safeguarding underpin day-to-day safe care practices.

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
12A (2001)	ensure that the registered person shall so far as is reasonably practicable, ensure that the placement plan is consistent with any plan for the care of the child prepared by his placing	31/10/2011

	authority (Regulation 12.4)	
17B (2001)	ensure a written record is made in a volume kept for the purpose which must include: 3(h) confirmation that the person authorised by the registered provider to make the record has spoken to the child concerned and the person using the measure about the use of the measure; 4(b) details of any methods used to avoid the need to use that measure. (Regulation 17B (3&4))	31/10/2011

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 (National Minimum Standards 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 healthcare along with other developments in accordance with the Standards (National Minimum Standards 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. (National Minimum Standards 15.2)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people make good progress in the home. They gain confidence to express their views and learn interpersonal skills to help them develop relationships. Young people and the staff place great importance in their relationships with one another. This enables successful negotiation and compromise in their day- to-day care. Young people are encouraged to look at their lives in a positive way, understand how events have taken place, and make positive decisions based on their future.

Young people are encouraged to make decisions about their lifestyles and health. Good health is promoted in the planning of meals and also considered in promoting lifestyle choices. In this way young people can understand how their behaviour may effect their health and the guidance they are given enables them to make the right choices.

Day-to-day healthcare and routine appointments with core services ensure that young people's more general health is effectively maintained. It was noted in one case that planning and attendance was difficult to ascertain and it was difficult to

establish if health was being successfully promoted to a good standard.

Young people have good attendance at school and other educational provisions which in many cases has exceeded previous expectations. Progress has been good in many areas and young people have as a result been able to take and pass examinations appropriate to their abilities.

Group activities and memberships in clubs and organisations give young people the opportunity to engage in the wider community. Young people are also encouraged to shop and access services such as the library, and sporting facilities to encourage them to gain confidence and experience. In this way young people are able to establish useful contacts and relationships with the community and learn important life skills. All young people partake in independency and life skill programmes within the home and this is more formally structured for older young people as part of their pathway planning.

All young people are encouraged to learn life skills and supported to understand the skills that they will need for adulthood. Young people benefit from this training as it helps them to develop a realistic picture of adulthood. This enables them to make choices and express views or concerns. Young people express confidence in this area and partake in tasks and activities planned to promote their readiness for independence and adult living. Although support is in place along with independence programmes, progress and development records are rather sparse in many areas making assessment of progress rather difficult to navigate. Therefore, whilst independence activities may be in place it is unclear in some areas where and to what level progress is being made.

Quality of care

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

Young people enjoy positive and constructive relationships with staff and each other and behave positively. Staff form and maintain trusting relationships with young people that are resilient and enduring.

Young people express their views and wishes openly in day-to-day contact as well as more formally in children's meetings. Views are discussed and staff listen, respond to, and record the comments from young people.

Views and opinions influence decisions in the home and young people feel that they have an effective voice. Key working sessions are also held for young people to meet on a one-to-one basis with staff. This presents an effective opportunity for young people to express views and opinions.

When it is not possible to follow the choices or wishes of young people staff explain to the young people why this is and the young people have the opportunity to raise representation or complaint if they are dissatisfied. Complaints are uncommon in this home, but any complaints are well managed, thoroughly investigated and the young

person is consulted throughout the process to conclusion.

Young people benefit from detailed and generally comprehensive care planning. Placement plans demonstrate that the more diverse and individual characteristics of the young person is evidenced and addressed. Plans are regularly discussed with the young person in order that they may make comments or express views. Plans are generally well managed and highly individualised enabling staff to understand young people's needs in the context of their behaviour and abilities. Young people are encouraged and supported to express choice based on their wishes and diversity. Religions and customs are discussed with the young people within the care planning and placement planning process and staff seek to support all young people with self expression. It was noted in one case that the previous recommendations of the statutory review had not been successfully implemented. Although it is accepted that some confusion existed between the placing authority and the home, action to address this had not been prompt in addressing the matter.

Young people are supported by good healthcare planning and this ensures that they are registered promptly with core health services which include the general practitioner (GP), dentist and optician. Young people benefit from regular treatments and more specialised interventions are planned and discussed with them. To ensure medical treatments and historic interventions are considered in planning, all young people are supported by well maintained health records and documentation. Young people are provided with appropriate health advice and resources by a dedicated healthcare advisor and qualified nurse employed by the home. The nurse and the health advisors visit the home both upon request and routinely provide young people and staff with opportunities to meet and speak with them.

All young people in the home are receiving educational support through schooling or college attendance. Although progress is varied in some cases, young people have benefitted from support in this area. Attendance is good and some young people are maintaining attendance exceeding previously forecast expectations. Staff work hard to support young people in this area and purposeful relationships have been forged with the schools and colleges. To support young people in the home, the staff members maintain a school diary which details all communications with the school and young person. This document monitors progress and educational development. Staff members therefore enhance young people's educational opportunities by consistently supporting their education.

Young people are given the opportunity to engage in activities and hobbies. Staff support young people to adopt healthy lifestyles by planning and arranging a host of pursuits. These include cycling, walking, and other outdoor activities. Young people are encouraged to express their choices and join clubs and community-based activities. This provides young people not only with the opportunity to engage in healthy and fulfilling pastimes, but supports integration in to the wider community.

The home is appropriately located, designed and maintained with high quality furnishings and equipment. Maintenance is well managed and any repairs or

refurbishments are promptly undertaken. The home is kept clean and tidy and provides the accommodation and services detailed within the Statement of Purpose.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people feel safe in the home and understand that they are protected by well managed and effective systems of safeguarding. All young people understand their rights to be safe and feel safe and young people are confident to express any concerns to the staff.

Staff talk to the young people about risk and risk-taking behaviour and offer them guidance to help keep themselves safe.

Young people are kept safe and benefit from care that is provided by staff that are trained and competent in matters of safety and child protection. All staff receive regular training in this important area and their knowledge and understanding of this subject is appraised in their development planning and supervision. Any allegation or suspicion of abuse is promptly reported and well managed by an experienced and knowledgeable safeguarding co-ordinator. Subsequent investigation into allegations provides effective protection for children, the person making the allegation, and at the same time supports the person who is the subject of the allegation. Anti-bullying procedures and vigilant staff ensure that any suspected bullying is promptly and effectively addressed. Incidents of bullying or intimidation are uncommon in this home.

All young people are subject to thoughtful and considered risk assessment. Assessments seek to identify specific areas that present increased risk and plans are made to reduce risk appropriately. Risk assessments are detailed, comprehensive and regularly reviewed and these provide an excellent profile of each young person which are effective in minimising risk.

If young people become absent or missing from the home, staff take prompt actions to address this. Formal protocols are followed for searching, reporting and recovering the young person and these procedures are effective in safeguarding and protecting the young people. When a young person returns, the home considers the circumstances of the absence from the home and level of risk. If the risk is considered high or the behaviour is uncharacteristic, the home arranges for an independent social worker to meet with the young person and discuss the event. Following the interview the staff take appropriate action in an attempt to reduce the risk of reoccurrence.

Behaviour is well managed in the home although young people challenge boundaries and rules as they exercise their independence. Staff support young people by acting promptly when behaviour is less positive and seeking to negotiate and compromise. This approach is generally successful and encourages more positive outcomes. The home does not impose punitive measures of control and staff typically engage with

the young person to avoid sanctions and more formal responses. When behaviour is more challenging or concerning, sanctions may be used to encourage young people to act more positively. Behaviour control is successful and young people understand their responsibilities and the expectations of their behaviour.

All staff in the home are rigorously screened, vetted and assessed before they are able to work with the young people. This ensures that only appropriate people work in the home and that they are safe and competent to meet the need of the young people. All statutory checks and employment references are completed before staff are employed and young people are asked to comment on new staff entering the home. To ensure safety in the home is maintained, all visitors to the home must identify themselves and sign in and out of the property. Visitors are not permitted to have unsupervised access to the young people or home.

The environment in the home is physically safe and appropriately secure for the young people resident in the home. Health and safety and fire safety are robustly maintained and regular review and assessment of the environment takes place. Fire evacuation drills are regularly held to ensure that both staff and young people are aware of how to exit the building in an emergency. Risk assessments are also undertaken to consider the environment and the effect of young people's behaviour upon it. In this way comprehensive safety assessment provides young people with a safe and controlled environment, supportive of their needs and abilities.

Leadership and management

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

Leadership is strong and the home is well managed in areas of practice. Staff are aware of their responsibilities and the expectations of their roles. Staff are motivated, organised and understand the needs of the young people. Appraisal of staff takes place at a minimum of twice per year and the manager uses this process to ensure staff are focussed on their roles, competent to support the young people and continue their professional development. Professional training is provided for all staff to ensure that they are knowledgeable of their role and the professional and legal developments that impact on that role. Training schedules are well managed and staff frequently attend training and receive guidance to ensure that they are able to meet the needs of the young people.

Staff are available in the home in sufficient number to meet the needs of the young people and the home manages an out of hours and on-call service where extra staff can be deployed in the home. The home is adequately resourced, indicating the financial viability of the provider. All staff members receive regular supervision to provide them with day-to-day support in their role and to promote their professional development. Staff say that they feel supported by the supervisor role and can discuss or share any matter that could influence their performance. Regular staff meetings also take place and these forums offer staff the opportunity to consider collective views and opinions about the home and their practice. This support for staff ensures that they are well managed, focussed and competent to understand

and meet the needs of the young people.

To ensure that the staff and the services provided for the young people continue to develop and improve comprehensive Regulation 33 and Regulation 34 inspections and monitoring take place. The Regulation 33 inspections act as a quality assurance process and this monitoring far exceeds the national minimum standards. This process forms the basis for improvement and development programmes undertaken by the home. Actions taken to address areas for improvement are prompt and effective.

Young people's records are clear, up to date and stored securely, and contribute to an understanding of the child's life. Records demonstrate insightful and comprehensive assessments and planning for the young people.

Recommendations and requirements from inspections are promptly addressed and all staff members are involved in areas where development or review is identified. This ensures that staff members are engaged in the process and enabled to develop their practice accordingly. The home maintains and frequently reviews the Statement of Purpose for the home. This is comprehensive, detailed and sets out clearly the services that are provided for the young people. Young people are all provided with a children's guide that breaks down the services included in the Statement of Purpose and details the services within the home. The Statement of Purpose is available in the home for young people and placing authorities; visitors are also provided with this document upon request.

All significant events relating to the protection of the young people accommodated in the home are notified by the registered person of the home to the appropriate authorities and appropriate action is taken following the incident.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.