

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Dawn Taylor
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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 home is registered to accommodate up to four young people of either gender from 14 to under 18 years of age. Young people participated in the inspection visit. The service is owned by a private company. The home is a semi-detached property situated in a residential suburb.

The purpose of the home is to offer young people a service that provides semi-independent living in a supported environment. Young people are supported to gradually develop sufficient practical independent living skills and emotional maturity to move on to a more independent setting.

Overall effectiveness

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

This is a good children's home. A key strength of the service is the experience and skill the Registered Manager and staff team have in supporting young people to gain the skills to successfully leave care and live independently. Young people are making consistent progress. Good quality care is delivered by a dedicated staff team. Staff have a strong understanding of safe working practices and are effective at balancing risky behaviour with the need to develop growing independence. The Registered Manager provides clear leadership to the staff team, which ensures that the aims and objectives of the home are achieved.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure the home provides a comfortable and homely environment and is well maintained and decorated (NMS 10.3)
- ensure records are clear, up to date and contribute to an understanding of the child's life.(NMS 22)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people know the aims of their placement because they meet with their key

workers on a regular basis and they participate in their reviews. The work undertaken by young people with the support of their key workers is successful in helping them talk about and address a wide range of topics and issues whilst working towards independence and leaving care.

Young people have a good understanding of their current lifestyles, and on an individual basis, are supported to think about how they want to live in the future. They explore topics such as education, employment, housing, health and staying safe. For example, under health, they discuss the impact risky behaviours may have on long-term health. They are supported to pay attention to their daily diet, regular exercise and where applicable consider how alcohol and substance abuse, smoking and anti-social behaviours also impact on their health and emotional well being. Young people express positive views about the support and guidance they receive from staff and confirm they learn to take responsibility for their own lives, which is consistent with the home's overall aim of supporting their transition to independent living.

Through an independence programme, young people successfully develop the confidence, skills and understanding to make healthy choices, attend college or employment, manage budgets and prepare and cook their own meals.

Quality of care

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

Staff ensure young people are provided with good practical training and emotional support to develop the skills they require, as an individual, to move on into adulthood. They are given safe opportunities to put into practice the skills they are learning such as budgeting, paying bills, cooking and managing their laundry. Staff ensure their progress is monitored and discussed with them on a regular basis and in a way that is meaningful and engaging. Staff work effectively with leaving care teams, families, social workers and other agencies and ensure that young people are made fully aware of issues relating to accommodation, education, employment and financial support.

The home's domestic routines and activities are organised in a way that supports coaching and mentoring opportunities in all areas such as budgeting and cooking. Staff approach daily tasks and routines with the aim of developing young people's awareness and knowledge about what it means to live independently. At the same time they demonstrate sensitive parenting skills, still cooking meals for key events or if a young person is requiring some company or emotional support.

Young people are receiving good individual support that is consistent with their identified needs. Staff are well aware of the specific needs young people may have in relation to self-esteem and identity. Although the staff team's stated aim and purpose is to support young people to achieve independence, this is not done by assuming young people's needs are the same. Staff provide information and support on the basis of individual circumstances and the stated aims of young people

regarding their own futures. Where, after assessment, it is deemed a young person is not ready to develop independence skills and requires support in other specialist areas the staff team will support the placement until the young person is moved on. Where additional staffing is required agency staff are being used.

The home is clean but decoration is tired with some areas of old water damage, furniture is worn and carpets are badly stained. The office, cellar and staff sleep in rooms are being used to store broken or unused equipment and furniture, which looks unsightly and is a potential hazard. The small garden area to the rear of the house is overgrown and not being maintained. This has been highlighted in the regulation 33 reports but as yet no actions have been taken.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

The safety and welfare of young people living at this home is promoted at all times. There are policies and procedures in place that address bullying, managing inappropriate behaviours, making a safeguarding referral, missing persons, staff recruitment, complaints and health and safety. In addition, all young people have risk assessments that link to their placement plans. This results in staff having a good working knowledge of safeguarding and health and safety practices.

This staff team are skilled at assessing and ensuring the need to safeguard young people whilst promoting their developing independence skills. Staff support to young people through emotional difficulties is sensitive. Up until recently physical interventions were rarely used. Since the last inspection the service has supported a number of young people who have presented very difficult high risk behaviours. This has resulted in a slight increase but this has been quickly addressed working in partnership with the local police.

Bullying is not identified as a problem at the home. Staff are committed to ensuring that bullying in all its forms will be addressed. Bullying is totally unacceptable and is challenged on an individual and group basis when encountered.

The staff reinforce positive behaviour and this supports young people to develop self-esteem, self-belief and independent skills. Young people are encouraged and supported to behave in ways that will sustain them in the community once they have achieved independence. Staff are focused on providing behavioural boundaries that are fair and easily understood by young people.

A key strength of this service is the partnership work they have undertaken with a wide range of agencies. Communication is effective and results in consistent, safe strategies being used between professionals. For example, staff take appropriate action if a young person goes missing, in line with clear procedures and practice specific to each young person. Staff are successful in reducing behaviours through discussions and developing positive relationships. However, when incidents do occur they are managed effectively with clear communication taking place between

external agencies.

Young people's safety is promoted by a health and safety policy, which ensures risks are identified and appropriate action is taken to manage and reduce them. Young people and staff are involved in fire drills and there are regular checks on all fire and electrical equipment to ensure it is in good working order. All staff are appropriately trained in health and safety matters including first aid and fire awareness.

Recruitment and staff vetting was not looked at during this inspection. There have been no new staff appointed since the last inspection when the procedures were found to be robust.

Leadership and management

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

This service was judged as good at the last interim inspection. No recommendations or actions were made.

Young people are looked after by staff who are themselves proactively supported and guided by the home's Registered Manager. This service has good strengths and where areas for improvement emerge the Registered Manager recognises and manages them well. There are very clear lines of management and communication. Regulation 33 and Regulation 34 visits are well established and valued by staff and management. This internal monitoring and regulation ensures consistent good practice but also addresses shortfalls with an appropriate measure of rigor.

The service has recently been taken over by Keys Education Limited. The implementation of the new company's policies, procedures and staff training is on going.

Up until a month ago this home has had a settled staff team. Since then a number of staff have handed their notice in. This, and the short term need to increase staffing to meet an individual's needs has resulted in a number of staff meetings not taking place. This, and staff consistency is being actively monitored and addressed by the home's Registered Manager and line manager. The organisation has advertised to fill the vacant posts and dates for interviews are set.

Records are in place but in some cases do not reflect and evidence the good practice or have not been up dated in a timely manner. This makes it difficult to monitor young people's progress and ensure consistency in staff practice.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.