

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Sandra Jacobs-Walls
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This children's home is privately owned. It is a family business with a majority of family members employed within it. The home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to four children and young people who have emotional 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**.

This home is a good service with some outstanding features. Overall the service performs very well in meeting the identified needs of young people in placement. Staff provide very individualised care and young people know staff genuinely care about their well-being. Young people are encouraged to take responsibility for their lives and staff are committed to helping them make good progress.

The quality of the relationship between staff and young people is very good. Staff enjoy working with young people and helping them meet placement objectives. The staff group works collaboratively with other professionals to promote positive outcomes for young people in placement.

Young people's educational needs are well addressed and they attain significant academic achievement. Young people live health lifestyles and have access to good recreational opportunities. Staff's consultation with young people is meaningful and effective.

Young people are safe and feel protected by the service. The staff team demonstrates a keen commitment to improving the home's service provision. The last inspection issued no requirements or recommendations.

This inspection notes some shortfalls. Not all staff have completed the required NVQ training, the home's medication policy contains insufficient detail and the home's staff recruitment practices do not routinely include telephone contact with referees.

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
8 (2001)	ensure that the Registered Manager obtains the required management qualification necessary for managing the children's home (Regulation (8)(b)(i))	01/01/2013
21 (2001)	make suitable arrangements for the safe administration of any medicines received into the children's home. In particular revise the home's existing medication policy. (Regulation 21(1))	01/11/2012

Recommendations

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

- ensure that all existing care staff have attained a minimum level 3 qualification. (NMS 18.5)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

The home provides young people with a stable, secure, caring environment. Young people describe their experiences of the home as being positive and share good relationships with the staff group. One young person comments about the staff, 'The staff are good, they make me laugh and are fun being around. They offer good advice. It feels like home, actually living with your own family'. Young people experience significant growth in their overall development while in placement.

Young people receive individualistic and personalised care and the quality of care is excellent. Young people's identity needs are well met and issues pertaining to young people's self-confidence is consistently explored throughout the duration of the placement. As a result young people develop a positive self-image and a sense of belonging. Young people's needs arising from their learning disability or issues around sexuality, are well met by the service. Young people routinely celebrate their heritage, religion and culture and this assists with their understanding of who they are and their individual backgrounds.

Young people regularly participate and contribute to relevant community events and festivals that are reflective of their culture, religion and gender. As a result, young people are able to positively contribute to both the home and the wider community. This again offers them a sense of belonging and a positive community presence.

Young people live healthy lifestyles. They are promptly registered with primary health care services soon after placement start and their case files contain clear health care and medical information. Young people have access to range of relevant health care services such counselling, drug and alcohol preventative services and nutritional and sexual health services. This access is essential to enhance healthy physical lifestyles and the development of good emotional resilience. Young people very much enjoy the opportunity to prepare and cook traditional dishes from their country of origin.

Young people make good educational progress while in placement, the service regards the educational attainment of young people as a priority. All young people understand this expectation and as a result all attend school or alternative educational resources. Young people are involved in educational activities on site, such as IT support, which acts to enhance their academic performance. Young people's placement plans are explicit in outlining educational needs and how the service intends to meet these needs. The home facilitates quiet space and learning resources for the purpose of homework.

Young people's family members and friends are made welcome at the home and staff make good efforts to support contact. Young people benefit from the home's flexible approach toward visitation at the home. Staff encourage young people to develop and build upon existing positive relationships and discourage relationships that are not in the best interest of young people. There are clear boundaries in place about having visitors and these are well known to young people. Residents' case files contain comprehensive information about agreed contact arrangements. Where individuals are prohibited from contact with young people, this is highlighted on file. Where key family members live abroad, staff support young people to maintain meaningful contact if they so wish.

Young people develop good self-care skills while in placement. Tasks include young people getting involved in meal preparation, shopping, as well as managing their own laundry and keeping their bedrooms tidy. Older young people participate in the home's structured life skills programme. Young people's practical skills are assessed and areas of weaknesses are identified. Young people benefit from the opportunity to develop these skills so they are proficient in caring for themselves safely and independent of others. Staff encourage young people to increase their life skills as the placement progresses.

Quality of care

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

Staff and management demonstrate a keen commitment to ensuring young people

have very positive outcomes while in their care. The home's quality of care is excellent. One staff member commented 'I love seeing young people achieve. It's important that they are happy, make good progress and can manage adulthood. That's what it's all about here, progress'. Another staff member said of the service 'We are family and we make sure young people are a part of it, family. We're open and have a child centred approach to everything we do. We're rewards based and this works with our kids'. Young people achieve significant personal growth as the placement progresses. This is demonstrated through areas such as the reduction in extreme challenging and risky behaviour, absconding patterns, and a newly developed commitment to education. Young people share a very positive relationship with the staff group and staff members indicate that they enjoy helping young people meet their full potential.

Staff ensure that issues pertaining to young people's cultural background and personal identity are well explored during the placement planning process and consistently thereafter.

The service ensures that young people live healthy lifestyles while living at the home. They are promptly registered and have good access to primary health care services and any specialist services as required. Staff share a good working relationship with healthcare professionals such as the looked after children's nurse, drug and alcohol services and the local Children and Adolescence Mental Health Service (CAMHS).

The staff group includes individuals who are qualified to provide key health care services on site. So, for example amongst the staff group is a qualified nutritionist, a sexual health worker and a drama instructor. Young people benefit from the opportunity to work with staff who are very familiar to them in dealing with sensitive issues such as sexuality, contraception, healthy eating and weight control. Young people enjoy also innovative approaches to sharing their feelings and expressing themselves that include role play and mirror image work. As a consequence young people are able to address some very challenging aspects of their lives in a safe and creative space. Young people make excellent use of and clearly benefit from these on-site resources, with staff that they know care about them.

Staff maintain good records of medical and health care needs and how these are to be addressed. Young people's case files contain clear documentation of medical appointments, their outcomes and any treatment options. Staff regularly speak with young people about living healthy lifestyles, including the hazards of smoking, self-harm, the use of alcohol and the misuse of illegal substances. Staff manage appropriately the administration of young people's medication.

Young people's educational achievement is promoted by the placement. Staff demonstrate a commitment to ensuring young people make the most of their educational opportunities and that appropriate educational resources are secured. All current residents attend school or college and very recently some have achieved good vocational and GCSE exam results. Staff offer educational input at the home, in particular maths and IT support classes; one member of staff is a qualified IT specialist. Young people benefit from the opportunity to strengthen their academic

abilities. The home ensures that young people with learning difficulties receive appropriate support to maximise their educational achievement. Staff facilitate good communication with schools and colleges and key work sessions focus on young people's educational needs. Young people's educational needs are also consistently explored in key work sessions and statutory looked after children reviews.

Young people have access to a good range of recreational activities. They enjoy staff's participation and genuine interest in events and activities that are of interest to residents. Positive self-image is of great importance to the young people and staff ensure that young people have good access to funds and activities that enhance positive self-image. So for example some staff assist young people participate in local sporting and cultural events and young women have access to hair, nail and beauty sessions at the home via a member of staff who is a qualified nail and beauty technician. The home is well equipped with a range of play and leisure equipment. These include two TV lounges, a computer, books and popular fashion magazines, board games, audio equipment etc. Young people enjoy and make very good use of these.

Young people are listened to and given ample opportunity to share their views and opinions with all staff members. Young people feel that staff and management are interested in their opinions and what they have to say about the service and more general issues. The home operates an 'open door policy' and so young people have good access to the staff group, including management, whenever they feel it necessary. The inspector keenly observed this during the inspection. Staff understand the value of consultation and spend much time speaking and engaging constructively with young people. Young people's key work sessions routinely explore placement issues as does statutory review meetings. The home also convenes residents' meetings as another forum for young people to share their views and opinions.

Young people understand and are very aware of the home's complaints procedures. They have good access to clear written information about making complaints and relevant independent bodies available to advocate on their behalf. Staff consistently speak with young people about their rights in general and in particular, their right to log complaints against the home if they so wish. Since the last inspection there have been four recorded complaints. Staff managed these appropriately and in accordance with the home's complaints procedures.

The home's building provides young people with welcoming, homely accommodation. The premises are well maintained and decorated. Young people are happy with their surroundings. Each young person has their own bedroom which they personalise with photographs, artwork and posters. Young people's bedrooms are well furnished.

The home's placement and care planning processes are consistent and robust. Staff and young people benefit from clear written guidance with regard to these processes. Young people are cared for in line with individual placement plans and receive very personalised care that meets their specific needs. Staff of the home pursue comprehensive information from social workers in order to ensure that

placements offer services that meet the needs of each young person well. Staff maintain clear, updated records and case files consistently evidence that placement planning, meeting and statutory reviews are appropriately convened. This is important to establish and agree with all parties the placement goals and objectives from the outset of placement negotiations. Young people are aware of the purpose of their placement and likely long-term placement plans. The quality of care offered by the home is excellent.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Staff ensure the safety of young people living in the home and young people feel safe while in placement. Staff relationships with young people is positive. Young people appreciate staff and managers' 'open door' policy of making themselves available to listen to their views. As a consequence young people are clear who to approach if they felt unsafe. Young people have access to useful information about independent bodies available to advocate on their behalf. Young people indicate that bullying is not an issue for the home. The home's premises are physically safe and appropriately secure and young people feel safe in their surroundings.

Staff of the home receive on-going training, both formal and informal that is focused on child protection and issues of safeguarding. This learning is on-going and features in team meeting and individual staff supervision. The home's child protection policies and procedures are comprehensive and in line with current legislation and guidance. These have been shared with the host local authority for consideration. The home's child protection policies identify the organisation's designated person, responsible for the management of allegations. There have been no child protection enquiries or allegations made against the service since the last inspection.

Staff have access to clear information about action to be taken when young people are absent from the home without permission or are deemed 'missing'. These written protocols have been shared with the host local authority and support staff take effective action when young people are unexpectedly absent. Young people understand these procedures and are aware they are in place for their own protection. Some of the home's current residents have an extensive history of being absent or missing from previous placements. While this trend continues to a degree at the home, the frequency has reduced, as has some extreme risky behaviour evident historically. Staff are consistent in their messages to young people about returning to the home in line with placement agreements and for their own protection. This issue is a regular feature of key work sessions and 1:1 discussions. Young people benefit from staff's persistence in sensitively addressing their unauthorised absences from the home.

The home does not experience sustained poor behaviour from young people living there. Young people's behavioural issues are generally linked to their absconding from the home and they feel that staff deal with issues fairly. Staff have access to clear behaviour management policies and procedures and this is supplemented by

on-going relevant training. Young people benefit from the home's clear ethos and practice of offering consistent praise and rewards for sustained acceptable behaviour. This approach is effective in curbing young people's poor or unacceptable behaviour. Staff have access to clear policies and practice with regard to the use of sanctions. Young people feel that the home's use of sanctions is fair and commonly involves the suspension of privileges. Staff maintain good records of all sanctions imposed and young people have the opportunity to formally comment on individually imposed sanctions.

Bullying is not an issue for the home. Young people are confident that in the event of acts of bullying occurring, that staff would manage the situation appropriately. There are sound policies in place that support the home's zero tolerance stance for bullying and young people understand this.

Staff receive training in conflict resolution and physical intervention. Restraint techniques are to be used with young people in instances where significant risk to safety are posed. Staff are clear that physical intervention is only to be used when all other strategies have failed and immediate risks are posed. The home has no recorded incidents of any young person being restrained.

The home has policies and procedures in place with regard to the safe vetting and selection of staff. However while staff personnel records evident all required vetting checks and information, the home does not routinely follow up written references with telephone enquiries with referees. This is important to verify the information supplied in written references and confirm that applicants are suitable to work with vulnerable young people.

The home's premises are physically safe and appropriately secure and young people feel safe in their surroundings. Staff address general health and safety issues well and there are relevant risk assessments in place. Fire precautionary measures are sound and appropriate service contracts are in place for fire, gas and electrical equipment. Staff conduct routine building checks regularly to ensure the safety of all occupants.

Leadership and management

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

The home is run and managed by members of the same family and operates as a family business. The notion of 'family' is important to the staff group and forms the basis of the home's practice. Young people are appreciative of this approach and feel the management of the home is effective. They also feel that the home is well run.

The home's Registered Manager has sound residential child care, child protection and management experience. However, the Registered Manager is yet to enrol and complete the required management qualification. This is important to ensure that young people benefit from informed management practices. Young people have very good access to both the Registered Manager and Registered Individual who has a

regular presence at the home. The entire staff group demonstrates a genuine commitment to improving the home's service provision and keeping young people safe. There is a clear developmental plan that is explicit in outlining how improvements are to be made. The service has recently recruited a child care consultant to assist with this process. The home is financially viable and there are no outstanding actions or recommendations from previous inspections. The Registered Manager ensures that relevant notifications to Ofsted and other identified organisations are promptly forwarded.

Stakeholders, including young people, have access to clear information about services offered by the home. The home's statement of purpose document contains clear and accurate information about the home's aims, objectives, facilities and key information about its operation. The young people's guide is a creative and useful summary of services offered by the home. This information is written in age-appropriate language so it is easily accessible to residents.

The home employs a sufficient number of staff to ensure the needs of young people are met. Additional staff are readily available to keep young people safe. The staff group are experienced, well trained and qualified. The staff group enjoy a good range of training opportunities. However, one member of staff is yet to enrol and complete the required NVQ training at level 3. This is important to ensure practice is current, in line with legislation and of a high standard. Staff support and supervision is regular and meaningful, and the Registered Manager conducts appraisals on an annual basis.

Staff record information in young people's files well. Entries are clear, current and comprehensive and identify how the service is addressing placement objectives. This is important so that all parties are clear of the purpose and progress of young people's placements. Managers conduct periodical file audits to monitor the quality of recording. The home's key work system is effective and young people benefit from having one staff member specifically allocated to co-ordinate their care while at the home. Staff and young people make good use of the looked after children's reviewing process and ensure the views and opinions of all parties are considered.

The home's monitoring systems are effective and young people benefit from the home's commitment to improving its service provision. The home's monitoring systems include the close supervision of staff performance, the use of team meetings to address service development and residents' meetings to ensure young people are satisfied with services provided. The Registered Manager is responsible for the development and implementation of the home's policies and procedures. The inspection finds that these the home's policies are generally comprehensive and in line with current legislative guidance. However, the home's medication policy is insufficiently detailed. The further development of this policy and procedure is important to ensure that staff have access to clear information to inform their practice in the safe management of young people's medication.

A child care consultant conducts monthly, unannounced monitoring visits as per Regulation 33. Subsequent monitoring visit reports are appropriately detailed and

forwarded to Ofsted as required. The Registered Manager completes monitoring reports in line with Regulation 34. The home's monitoring systems act to identify strengths and weaknesses of the service and assist service development and improvement. This is of clear benefit to young people living 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.