

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Sandra Jacobs-Walls
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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 privately operated and provides long-term residential placements to four young women aged between 14 years and 18 years old. The home extends its services to now offer care and support to expectant and young mothers. Young women are able to reside at the home with their babies. The service offers an outreach support service to young people 16 years old and upwards who have moved on to independent accommodation. The home's premises offer en-suite facilities to each bedroom.

Overall effectiveness

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

The home provides services which prepare young people to achieve self-sufficiency, self-reliance and develop independence. Young people enjoy living at this home and feel the staff group genuinely caring for them in a way that makes them feel valued. Young people are well protected by the home's practice, policies and procedures. They live in a nurturing environment and feel staff are committed to their well being. The staff group in turn enjoy caring for the young people, take an interest in all aspects of their lives and actively encourage positive outcomes for young people. The home is well run and the leadership is strong. Promotion of equality and diversity is also a strength.

There are some shortfalls which were identified during the inspection. Outstanding from the previous inspection is completion by staff of training in physical intervention. The home's regulation 33 visit reports are not forwarded to Ofsted as promptly as required. While the service has comprehensive safeguarding and child protection policies and procedures are in place, these are yet to be shared with the host local authority for consultation. Some young people's case files do not evidence medical consent forms that are legally required to facilitate prompt and immediate medical attention if needed. Staff appraisals are over due.

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
17 (2001)	ensure that all persons employed receive appropriate training in physical intervention (Regulation 27(4)(a))	01/12/2011

33 (2001)	supply a copy of the regulation 33 report to the HMCI as required (Regulation 33(5)(a))	03/10/2011
27 (2001)	ensure that staff receive an appropriate appraisal. (Regulation 27(4)(a))	01/12/2011

Recommendations

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

- submit the home's child protection procedures for consideration and comment to the Local Safeguarding Children's Board and the Local Authority Designated Officer for child protection (NMS 20.4)
- ensure that where necessary consent for medical treatment is obtained. (NMS 6.5)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Outcomes for young people in placement at the home significantly improve from the point that they are first admitted to the home.

Staff encourage young people to take pride in themselves. Staff pay good attention to young people's identity needs and ensure these are well addressed. Young people's case files contain useful information about the identity needs of young women in placement. Young people 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 women and staff ensure that young people have good access to funds and activities that enhance positive self-image. For example, some staff assist young people with the braiding of their hair at the young people's request. The young women are appreciative of staff efforts to enhance the way they present and how they are perceived by others. Young people feel that it is a good indication that staff genuinely care about them.

The service ensures that young people are aware and are interested in maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Staff encourage young people to register with primary care services soon after the placement starts. Staff document well young people's health care and medical needs and how these are to be met. Medical consent forms however, are not consistently evidenced on file. This is important to ensure clarity about who is responsible for authorising medical and health care treatment for young people, especially in an emergency situation. Staff have effective working relationships with health care professionals such as the looked after children's nurse, sexual health advisors and substance misuse services. Young people's case files contain good information about health care and medical needs and how young people and the

service plan to address these issues. Staff document risk assessments and conduct key work sessions that have a regular focus on health issues such as the hazards of alcohol use and the misuse of illegal substances. Young people have access to mental health services where this is deemed necessary. Accidents at the home are rare.

Young people enjoy varied and nutritionally balanced meals that meet their dietary needs and preferences. Older young people participating with the home's semi-independent programme are encouraged to plan and prepare meals under the supervision of staff. If they so wish, young people participate in activities that facilitate physical exercise. For example some young people have membership at local gymnasium and leisure centres. The home ensures that young people have access to funds to facilitate their participation in identified interests such as swimming, ice skating and football.

The home considers education and training as a priority and encourage young people's educational success. Young people benefit from staff's consistent liaison with educational professionals to secure educational placements. Young people also have the opportunity to complete basic learning at the home while not attending school. Some young people have recently completed GCSE examinations or are returning to education after a significant period of absence. Young people participate in key work sessions that focus on education and this is also a keen focus in statutory looked after children's reviews. Staff encourage and support young people to apply for and seek part time employment if they so wish. Staff maintain good records of young people's educational progress and these assist in addressing identified educational needs as necessary. Young people benefit from staff's interest and efforts to promote their educational attainment.

Young people enjoy the welcoming ethos and attitude staff have towards the visitors to the home. Young people are clear that their friends and family members are welcome to visit them at the home in accordance with the home's boundaries and expectations with regard to visitation. Young people are clear about these rules and feel they are appropriately flexible.

Staff make good efforts to ensure there is clear understanding of young people's contact arrangements at the outset of the placement. Staff encourage young people to develop and maintain positive relationships with their significant others. Staff record clear information about these arrangements on file, and pay good attention where contact with individuals is prohibited. Young people enjoy the flexibility of contact with family and friends. Some having overnight stays with family with the permission of the placing authority. As required, staff will also consult constructively with the parents of young people.

Young people benefit from the home's efforts to assist them in developing practical skills that prepare them for independence. Staff monitor and support older young people with life skills as they approach the transition to leave local authority care. Staff assist young people to develop skills in shopping, budgeting, meal preparation, laundry, saving, and preparing for employment. The programme is sufficiently

detailed and includes effective assessment and the development of young people's ability to function independently in key practical areas.

Quality of care

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

Young people share positive relationships with staff of the home and staff are equally positive about working with young people in placement at the home. The management team encourages and fosters meaningful relationships between staff and young people and all parties clearly benefit from this.

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 have a good understanding of the home's complaints procedures as this information is contained in literature presented by staff at the start of the placement. There have been no complaints received since the last inspection; young people comment that they have had no reason to make complaints, but would do so if they felt it necessary. Young people are confident that in the event of a complaint being made, staff would act appropriately.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people are clear that they feel well protected by staff while in placement at the home. Staff have access to comprehensive child protection training that is ongoing throughout their employment with the provider, who is also a child protection trainer. The service has clear safeguarding and child protection policies and procedures in place that support staff practice. However these are yet to be shared with the Local Safeguarding Children's Board as outlined in the national minimum standards. There have been no allegations or incidents of a child protection nature at the home 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 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. Young people's case files indicate and staff comment that 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 been significantly reduced. 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 addressing absences from the home.

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

Young people indicate that bullying is not an issue for the home and does not happen. 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 this is well known to the young people.

The previous inspection had highlighted that staff had not received recent training in physical intervention. This is important to ensure that staff have access to safe techniques that help diffuse volatile situations. Staff are yet to complete this training and so the action is repeated. Managers are clear that restraint would only be used in the most exceptional of circumstances. Since the last inspection no young person has been subject to restraint by staff.

Young people benefit from the robust selection and vetting of staff for the home. The home's recruitment practices are conducive with the regulations and the home's own policies and procedures. No new staff have been recruited to work in the home since the last inspection. Previous review of staff personnel files evidence full and comprehensive information as required including valid Criminal Record Bureau checks.

The home is physically safe and appropriately secure and young people feel safe in their surroundings. Staff address well general health and safety issues 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.

Leadership and management

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

Young people feel the management of the home is effective and that the home is well run. The home's registered manager is also the home's responsible individual. The provider has extensive child protection, residential child care, and management experience and is a qualified social worker. Young people indicate that they have very good access to the registered person and this is well observed during the inspection. The registered person demonstrates a genuine commitment to improving the home's service provision. However there is no clear evidence of a developmental plan that is explicit in outlining how these improvements are to be made. Two actions were made at the last inspection, one issue, regarding restraint training for staff, remains unresolved.

Young people and staff benefit from clear management arrangements, the home is suitably resourced and young people receive good levels of support. Staff receive regular formal supervision and have good access to managers for advice and support outside of formal channels. Staff appraisals however, are over due. Staff work cohesively with each other to ensure good outcomes for young people.

The home's Statement of Purpose and children's guide are useful documents which are kept under review to inform young people and other interested parties about services and facilities available. Information in both documents are comprehensive and young people have access to information about the service that they can easily understand.

The service employs a sufficient number of staff to effectively meet the needs of young people. Staff have access to good support. The home provides staff with quality training that is both internal and externally facilitated. This helps inform and support staff practice. Staff have access to local authority training and staff development is high on the home's team meeting agenda. The staff group is diverse particularly in terms of ethnicity, gender and skill mix. This is of benefit to young people who benefit from the professional and personal experiences of the staff group. The service pays good attention to issues of equality and diversity on all levels.

The organisation has effective systems in place for monitoring the standards of care within the home. Issues are identified and addressed swiftly by the management team. A consultant conducts monthly, unannounced monitoring visits in line with regulation 33. Subsequent monitoring visit reports are sufficiently detailed, but are not forwarded to Ofsted in a timely fashion as required. 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 women in placement at the home.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.