

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Thomas Webber
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This children's home is one of two run by a limited company. It is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to a maximum of four young people, who may have emotional and 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 **adequate**.

Overall the home provides young people with an adequate quality of service due in part to the lack of effective management arrangements in place. However, there are key aspects of the care provision that are good, which ensures that young people are appropriately cared for.

Young people receive a good level of care and support from a committed staff team. They feel safe living at the home and are very positive about the quality of care and services provided and their overall experience of living at the home. Taking into account the previous experiences of young people, they are making good progress in various aspects of their lives. Staff fully support and promote young people to maintain their educational placements as well as to assist them to realise their potential. The personalised care and support young people receive enable them to also develop confidence in their ability which in turn, enhances their self-esteem.

Areas for improvement relate to the consistent and robust recording of medication and recruitment and the on-going monitoring of practices through regular supervision and appraisals.

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
21 (2001)	ensure that consistent written records are kept for the administration of medicines (Regulation 21(2)(c))	09/11/2012
26 (2001)	ensure that a full employment history is obtained, together with a satisfactory written explanation of any gaps in employment (Regulation 26(6)(a) and Schedule 2(6))	05/11/2012
27 (2001)	ensure that all persons employed receive appropriate supervision and appraisal. (Regulation 27(4)(a))	30/11/2012

Recommendations

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

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people make good progress due to the individualised care and support they receive from a committed staff team. This is further enhanced by the clinical input and oversight provided. Some young people have made significant improvements in the management of their emotions and in their ability to take responsibility for their behaviour. This has led to a reduction in their anti-social behaviour.

The home ensures that young people are given every opportunity to obtain their educational potential. Despite some young people's erratic attendance previously, they are now attending regularly and are making good progress in their educational aspirations.

Staff facilitate and ensure that agreed contact is maintained between young people and their families in line with their individual placement plans. Staff are very committed to supporting young people in this process, with some improvements having been achieved in particular relationships. As a result, the contact arrangements have significantly increased between young people and their families. The home also ensures that the families and the respective placing authorities are provided with regular updates on the progress and well-being of young people. This was endorsed by comments made by social workers and parents spoken with during the inspection.

The home ensures that young people receive the appropriate level of care and support to develop the required practical and social living skills. This helps to prepare them to cope with the transition into semi-independent living.

Quality of care

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

Young people live in a caring and supportive environment where they comment positively about the care, services and support they receive and their overall experience of living at the home.

Young people know how to complain and they are supported to raise any concerns or worries openly. The home has received three complaints since the last inspection: two were from a placing authority and the third from a young person. All complaints are taken seriously and thoroughly investigated, with appropriate action taken to deal with any concerns. Young people are provided with a range of opportunities to express their views and wishes. These contribute to the delivery of care provided and influence the running of the home.

The home ensures that young people receive continuity and consistency of care in line with their personalised and comprehensive placement plans. These documents provide staff with clear guidance on how to effectively meet the individual needs of young people. Young people are fully involved in contributing to their placement plans and their care planning arrangements.

Young people live in an environment where they are fully supported and given every opportunity to effectively manage their previous negative behaviours in a more constructive manner. Young people commented very positively about their achievements. Their progress was fully endorsed by their respective social workers.

The home ensures that the healthcare needs of young people are met. Excellent specialist support is readily available to meet the emotional and psychological needs of young people through individual therapeutic sessions. In addition, clinical oversight is also provided to staff, which gives them regular opportunities to raise and discuss any particular concerns relating to young people. Appropriate arrangements are in place for the safe management of medicines to promote the safety and well-being of young people. However, the practices in the recording of medication administered to young people are not sufficiently robust and consistent. Staff do not always sign for medication administered, and the number of tablets given is not always recorded.

Young people enjoy a varied diet and they are consulted in the menu planning process. Young people are provided with the opportunity to assist and take the lead in the preparation and cooking of meals. Although young people generally commented positively about the quality and quantity of meals provided, some felt that it depended on who undertook the cooking of the meals.

Young people are supported to maintain a healthy lifestyle by engaging in a range of purposeful leisure activities both within the home and in the wider community. These provide young people with the opportunity to try new and positive experiences. Young people spoke very positively about the opportunities available to them. Young

people are provided with an appropriate balance between structured activities and unsupervised time to enable them to develop friendships within the community.

The home recognises the importance of education for young people. Young people attend various educational placements which are tailored to meet their individual needs. Staff work and liaise very closely with young people's educational placements to ensure that good and effective communication is maintained between them and the home. The level of staff support and clear routines established by the home contribute to young people maintaining regular school attendance.

Young people live in a warm and welcoming environment which is maintained to a suitable standard, being clean, tidy and comfortable. It is also well furnished. Young people are provided with their own bedrooms, which are personalised to their individual tastes. They are fully involved in choosing their colour and bedding schemes. The home provides young people with a suitable level of communal space. This, together with sufficient bath, shower and toilet facilities meet the individual and collective needs of young people.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people feel safe and comfortable living at the home. They feel able to talk to members of staff and/or the psychological team about any worries and concerns they may have. The organisation did undertake a thorough investigation into concerns raised by a local authority and took effective action to deal with the issues raised. However, managers within the home have not always responded promptly to safeguarding concerns. As a result, all staff have received more robust safeguarding training. Incidents of young people going missing are rare. Staff demonstrate a clear understanding and take appropriate action which contributes to the safe return of young people at the earliest opportunity.

Young people are fully supported to develop and maintain appropriate levels of behaviour. This is achieved through the use of encouragement, reinforcement and positive behaviour incentives. These, together with positive relationships established with staff and clinical input, contribute to young people making significant progress. The therapeutic behaviour support plans provide staff with an effective tool, detailing clear strategies in helping them to manage the behaviour of young people. Staff are appropriately trained in the management of challenging behaviour by utilising the low arousal approach to defuse and distract situations. This practice has helped some young people to make significant progress and contributes to sanctions and restraints being kept to a minimum. All records, in relation to these methods of control, are appropriately maintained and monitored. Robust anti-bullying practices are also well established and monitored. Young people and staff do not currently see bullying as being a particular cause for concern. Young people stated that staff deal promptly with any incidents and these have been amicably resolved.

The staff recruitment practices for the careful vetting of new staff are not sufficiently

robust and therefore do not fully protect young people. Although most of the required checks are carried out prior to new staff commencing employment, gaps in the employment history of staff are not always sufficiently explored and recorded.

Young people live in a safe environment. Managers ensure that young people and staff are regularly involved in fire evacuation procedures. The various health and fire safety tests and servicing arrangements are accurately maintained and kept up to date to safeguard young people and staff.

Leadership and management

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

The current management arrangements of the home are not sufficiently effective. The recommendation made at the previous inspection has been appropriately addressed. This related to young people receiving prompt feedback in respect of any concerns and complaints raised. However, a range of recommendations made as a result of monitoring visits by the organisation are still outstanding. Some of the records relating to the management of the home are also not comprehensively maintained. The resignation of the Registered Manager in July 2012 has compounded the problem as the responsible individual is having to remotely manage the home on a part-time basis due to impending maternity leave. The organisation has taken steps to rectify the situation by the appointment of a new manager who is due to commence employment at the home on 22 October 2012.

The Statement of Purpose provides an overview of the aims and objectives of the home, describing the level of care and services young people can expect to receive. A young people's information booklet is also produced and provides young people with helpful information they need to know about the home.

Although staff are appreciative of the support provided, their performance is not appropriately monitored through the regular process of formal individual supervision and annual appraisals. However, daily handover meetings and regular staff meetings are held. These provide staff with on-going opportunities to raise and discuss particular concerns relating to individual young people as well as various working practices within the home. A particular strength of the home is the clinical oversight provided by the psychological team who provide input to both young people and staff. All records maintained by the home are kept secure, with young people fully contributing to those specifically relating to their care.

Young people benefit from being cared for by a stable staff team of whom the majority are appropriately trained. This, together with good staffing levels maintained throughout the day and night, ensure that the individual and collective needs of young people are met. Staff are also provided with good opportunities to enhance their knowledge, expertise and competence through attending appropriate training. Staff commented positively about the training opportunities available to them.

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.