

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Catherine Ross
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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 home that provides placements for young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties. It is registered to take up to four young people within the age range of eight to 17 years. It is run by a private company.

Overall effectiveness

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

Young people make good progress in relation to their starting points and thrive in a supportive environment. Robust care planning systems are in place and young people receive individual care and guidance from staff. Young people say they feel listened to. Relationships between young people and staff are positive. Good behaviour management strategies are in place. The committed, stable and well-trained staff team work hard to enable young people to reach their full potential. As a result, young people have opportunities to learn new skills and try out new activities. This includes accessing community activities and resources which help to increase their self-esteem. Young people's health needs are prioritised and they are enabled to access health services without delay. The home is managed and staffed by experienced personnel. The manager monitors the quality of care and welfare of young people and consults with young people to obtain their views on their care.

There is one requirement made in respect of recording the effectiveness and consequences of sanctions and a further recommendation regarding an oversight in relation to room search records. Some weaknesses were identified in understanding of responsibilities in relation to whistle-blowing and reporting safeguarding concerns to the appropriate people, which can impact on the safety of children. Two recommendations have been made in these areas.

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
17B (2001)	ensure that within 24 hrs of the use of any measure of control or discipline a written record is made which shall include the effectiveness and consequence of the use of the measure. (Regulation 17b (f))	31/12/2011

Recommendations

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

- ensure room searches are carried out in accordance with the home's guidance (NMS 3.20)
- ensure staff understand what they must do if they receive an allegation or have suspicions about the conduct of a member of staff. This is in relation to whistle-blowing (NMS 20.1)
- ensure allegations against people that work with children are reported by the designated person to the local authority designated officer (LADO). (NMS 20.6)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people make good progress in achieving positive outcomes in health, developing new skills and learning independent living skills to prepare them for adulthood. All young people are involved in educational placements and are progressing in their achievement. Young people are encouraged to keep photo albums of their time at the home to record memories and develop an understanding of their background.

Young people are involved in developing a menu that provides a healthy balanced diet and also includes their preferred foods. Young people help with the food shopping, preparation and cooking of meals. This means they benefit from a healthy diet whilst developing skills and confidence. Outdoor activities and exercise are also encouraged in order to promote healthy living. Young people are helped to understand their needs and how to maintain a healthy lifestyle. They are able to administer their own medication if suitably risk assessed and consent forms are in place. This means they learn to take responsibility for their own health

Young people are fully involved in the running of the home and are consulted if changes, such as the installation of a new kitchen, take place. As a result they make a positive contribution to their home. Young people are involved in designing a varied activity programme that meets their needs and interests. Working with a local art project has helped young people expand their skills in art, crafts and animation. This promotes their confidence and self-esteem.

Young people all have educational placements and are making good progress in relation to their starting points. Where young people choose not to attend or their educational placement is not meeting their needs, they are encouraged to stay busy and be active during the day. There is a daily timetable of activities in place to provide structure and learning if young people are not in education. All young people

are making progress towards educational goals. A college tutor commented on the significant progress a young person had made since the start of placement. They are now able to take part in educational tasks in a group environment as opposed to a one-to-one environment.

Young people develop skills to enable them to live independently and are prepared and supported towards adulthood. They undertake daily chores related to the upkeep of the home, for example vacuuming or cleaning windows. Young people who have left the home and moved to independence remain in contact with staff who endeavour to continue supporting them where appropriate with tasks such as applying for benefits.

Young people are able to have contact with people who are important to them. For example, where young people have requested to sleep over at friend's houses, appropriate checks are carried out to help keep them safe while enabling them to maintain friendships. Where contact is not appropriate, or arrangements are changed, this is explained to young people; staff support them following contact when their feelings and emotions are heightened. As a result, young people benefit from appropriate contact with their parents, family and friends.

Quality of care

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

Young people receive care which helps them make good progress from their starting points. Young people confirm they are involved in their care planning and are encouraged to read and sign their agreement or disagreement with their plans. Young people benefit from care that is focused on their individuality and identity. Care plans identify the background and the individual needs of the young person and how these can best be met. They also indicate how the young person is cared for, their daily routines, behaviours and how to minimise risks. Staff are aware of the inequalities young people in care face and challenge discrimination and barriers to equality.

Young people are actively engaged in how the home operates. They participate in regular young people's meetings. At these meetings they help plan menus and discuss activities. They also deal with any issues and concerns they may have. This aids them in learning how to make their voices heard and how to problem solve, as well as understanding why it may not be possible to act upon their wishes in all cases. Young people confirm they feel listened too by staff and they are aware of how to complain and are supported in making their complaint heard. Complaints are promptly addressed demonstrating that young people are listened to and their concerns are taken seriously. This enables young people to gain confidence and skills in communicating their opinions and views.

Young people benefit from warm, friendly and positive relationships with staff which enable them to feel secure in voicing their views and opinions. When asked what was good about the home, one young person stated, 'they listen to what you have to say

and try and help you when you are feeling down'. Staff provide firm and consistent boundaries and are committed to providing excellent care for young people. Relationships between young people are sometimes fraught as group dynamics mirror many teenage relationships with conflict and friendships within group living. However, staff and young people work together to try and manage these concerns which helps young people make progress in their relationships with each other.

Young people's physical, emotional and psychological health is promoted. They have access to various medical resources including sexual health clinics, mental health workers and drug and alcohol specialists. Staff support young people to attend appointments enabling them to take responsibility for their own healthcare. Staff are trained in first aid and in the administration of medication. The administration of medication is safe and is a strength of the home. Healthy living, diet and exercise is encouraged. Open discussions take place between staff and young people on health related issues such as limiting the amount of carbonated drinks young people consume. Staff know the young people well and key workers are able to support young people to explore health topics such as sexuality, relationships, smoking and alcohol consumption.

Staff are proactive and imaginative in encouraging young people to engage in a variety of activities in and outside of the home. Events are planned by staff and young people and all their interests are considered, for example attendance at a local football match. This enables them to develop a wide range of skills and enhance their confidence. Staff are positive role models for healthy living and join in activities with young people. They are encouraged to engage in local clubs. This supports them to contribute to their local and wider communities. They live in a home that is safe, but also provides a warm and homely environment. Young people have space to be on their own, as well as shared areas where they can socialise. The home is close to local amenities and leisure facilities which provide a range of opportunities for young people.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Staff and young people enjoy good relationships and this provides a foundation for the development of positive behaviour. Clear behaviour management plans are in place with strategies to enable young people to examine their actions in order to modify their behaviour. Restraint is generally used safely and the organisation has taken action to improve poor practice. Sanctions are used in line with behaviour management plans to help young people manage their behaviour. Although sanctions are appropriate and fair, there is currently no recording of the effectiveness and consequence of the use of the measure making it difficult to monitor the use of sanctions for patterns or effectiveness.

Staff receive training in child protection, however, staff understanding of their duty in relation to whistle-blowing about safeguarding concerns is poor. This could put young people at risk of harm. The Registered Manager has not always passed on

allegations about staff to the local authority designated officer which means young people may not be effectively protected.

When young people are missing, staff work closely with the local safer neighbourhood team to ensure they are protected as far as possible. Young people are supported to discuss reasons for absence and where they go when they are absent. Where there is concern about the frequency of young people going missing, multi-agency meetings are used to help protect young people. This means there is work being undertaken to reduce the likelihood of repeat incidents.

Robust recruitment practice protects young people from unsuitable staff. Young people are protected from unsuitable visitors to the home by good monitoring and checking of visitors. The building is safe and appropriately secure and young people and staff know what to do in the event of an evacuation. Regular fire drills are held and fire alarm systems are checked. There is a comprehensive fire risk assessment for the building and equipment. Regular daily maintenance checks are performed.

Leadership and management

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

Young people benefit from a home that has demonstrated improvement since the last inspection. There is evidence of positive changes in the safety of young people as a result of these improvements. At the previous inspection, a recommendation was made regarding risk assessments in relation to the control of hazardous products. These risk assessments are now in place making the home safer for the young people living there. A recommendation was also made around records relating to room searches. While a policy has been put in place, and young people now record their comments, staff still do not consistently make a record of room searches.

The home is managed by a qualified and experienced manager. The staff team have a variety of skills and experience and bring different strengths to the service. Parents and social workers speak highly of the excellent communication from the home. One parent stated, 'they always inform me of any problems regarding my child' and another stated, 'the manager has always been excellent in our communication with her and has shown a lot of insight, knowledge and empathy'. Young people feel welcomed into the home. On admission, they are given a welcome guide that explains the service they can expect from the home. New staff undertake the Children's Workforce Development Council's induction standards and are able to continue to develop their knowledge and skills through the provision of a variety of training opportunities. This improves their competency and ensures young people's needs are met. Staff are supported by a skilled management team and receive excellent standards of guidance and supervision. Staff have been encouraged to attend specific training related to the health needs of the young people in their care and have also received training from the company's psychotherapist. Staff have been provided with extra computer training to enable them to support young people when they are using computers. This demonstrates the management and staff

team's strong commitment to ensuring the service provided to young people remains of the highest quality.

The home has very good procedures for monitoring the quality of the service provided and the welfare of the young people. Visits are undertaken to the home in accordance with Regulation 33 and during these young people are consulted, ensuring the welfare of young people is monitored. The home is decorated to a satisfactory standard throughout and young people have chosen the décor for their bedrooms. There is an ongoing plan of improvement for the decor of the home and this is evidenced with the installation of a new kitchen. The home continues to improve through the implementation of a development plan. Staff are fully aware of the content of the development plan and their role in contribute to the development and progress of the home. The Registered Manager monitors records kept by the home to identify any concerns, patterns or trends. The manager and staff regularly consult young people on the quality of care and their welfare. As a result young people are consulted about the quality of care they receive and how effectively their needs are met and their welfare and protection is monitored.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.