

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Natalie Burton
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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 provides short break care and accommodation for six young people. A local authority owns and operates this setting.

Overall effectiveness

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

Young people make satisfactory progress in relation to their health needs, and are cared for by staff in a supportive and nurturing environment. The home provides satisfactory personalised care which takes account of young people's individual needs. Care planning systems are in place and young people receive individual care and guidance from staff. As a result, their individual needs are well met. Outcomes for young people are broadly satisfactory in relation to their health, safety and well-being. The quality of the relationships between staff and young people is strength of the home. Staff seek the views of the young people about the quality of care through residents meetings.

There are some shortfalls. These relate to, recordings of measures of control and maintaining young people's personal files, implementing a development plan, areas within health and safety, the Statement of Purpose and internal and external monitoring reports. These do not significantly impact on outcomes for young people.

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
33 (2001)	ensure visits under paragraph (1) or (2) take place at least once a month and may be unannounced. In addition supply a copy of the report required to the HMCI (Regulation 33 (3) (4) and (5)(a))	27/01/2012
34 (2001)	supply to the HMCI a report in respect of any review conducted by him for the purposes of paragraph (1), and make a copy of the report available on request to placing authorities where the placing authority is not the parent of a child accommodated in the home (Regulation 34 (2))	27/01/2012
5	keep under review, and where appropriate, revise the	27/01/2012

(2001)	Statement of Purpose. In particular in relation to the use of surveillance within the home (Regulation 5(a))	
17B (2001)	ensure that within 24 hours of the use of any measure of control, restraint or discipline in a children's home, a written record is made in a volume kept for the purpose (Regulation 17 (B) (3)(a-i))	27/01/2012
23 (2001)	ensure all parts of the home to which children have access are so far as reasonably practicable free from hazards to their health and safety. In particular with regard to generic risk assessments and records of control of substances hazardous to health. (Regulation 23 (a))	27/01/2012

Recommendations

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

- ensure records are clear, up to date and stored securely, and contribute to an understanding of the child's life (NMS 22.1 and 22.5)
- ensure the registered person has a written development plan, reviewed annually for the future of the home, either identifying any planned changes in the operation or resources of the service, or confirming the continuation of the home's current operation and resources (NMS 15.2)
- ensure the home provides a comfortable and homely environment and is well maintained and decorated. Avoidable hazards are removed as is consistent with a domestic setting. (NMS 10.3)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people achieve positive outcomes and are provided with sound quality care within a caring and supportive environment. Staff have appropriate knowledge and understanding of the complex individual needs of young people in their care, which enables adequate tailored responses to individual young people. Staff support young people to make positive progress based on their assessed abilities and needs, for example in some social skills and sleep patterns. Two social workers reported, 'all goals set for young people to reach are met'. This is supported by parents who say their child has made progress in, 'playing with other children' another in, 'accessing the community'. Young people receive positive recognition, which promotes expectations and positive behaviour.

Young people grow in confidence and develop good emotional resilience because they are treated with respect, have their needs sufficiently assessed, and their individuality facilitated and celebrated. Young people enjoy engaging in meaningful relationships with staff. These positive attachments are demonstrated by how

positively young people interact with the staff

Staff support young people to make choices. For example, in young people's meetings they are asked what they would like in their bedrooms and what makes them happy. Young people enjoy good health and healthy lifestyles. Close working arrangements with parents, external agencies and social workers ensure strategies to manage health needs are current and agreed by all parties. Young people are cared for by staff who are vigilant to changes in their health and so take agreed actions to keep them as healthy as possible.

Young people feel valued because they are encouraged to express their views, feelings and wishes. They are consulted on the food they would like to eat and activities they want to participate in. Young people benefit from clear communication between the staff and families. One parent commented that, 'I feel listened to as a parent. If I leave a message in the book, they always call me; I don't have to wait long at all to speak to someone.'

Young people make sufficient progress in their self-care skills, so increasing their independence. For example, packing their clothes at the end of a visit, getting ready for bed and completing appropriate daily chores. Young people take part in activities and interests and are encouraged to take more opportunities.

Quality of care

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

Young people enjoy sound relationships with staff and each other. They are looked after by a flexible and enthusiastic staff team. As such young people benefit from long term relationships and attachments to key people. One young person reported, 'I am really happy here. My key worker makes me happy, she is the best.' Young people's needs are sufficiently understood and interpreted enabling staff to respond to any discomfort and anxiety promptly. Staff are observant to any changes and signs to ensure young people's health, safety and welfare is promoted. Their understanding of young people's personal histories enables appropriate responses to individual young people.

Young people are cared for and develop confidence in a stable and nurturing environment. Parents report, 'they are a big help to me, the staff are fantastic and my child absolutely loves it' and, 'my main view is my child is getting good quality care'. Staff maintain sound relationships with young people while generally implementing clear expectations and boundaries. Staff encourage young people to explore opportunities to develop self-confidence. These relationships are a strength in underpinning the sound outcomes for young people.

Young people are supported by staff that have a sufficient commitment to promoting diversity and equality. Staff have an adequate understanding of the individuality, social, cultural and religious backgrounds of young people. They seek opportunities when young people can positively engage in activities to stimulate and broaden

young people's horizons. For example, day trips out. Young people's personal care is sensitively managed to preserve dignity and afford privacy.

Staff practice is personalised. The manager and staff analyse each young person's needs and mainly review the effectiveness of behaviour management strategies. Three parents report, 'communication is good, and they are consulted about the care of the child', and two social workers say, 'there is good communication'. This ensures views of the child, their family and social worker are sought on the child's care. Placement plans support young people's emotional, behavioural and learning processes. Parents identify that young people have mainly progressed since accessing the service.

The home provides young people with appropriate individual and communal accommodation. Although not all areas provide a comfortable and homely environment. For example, some rooms have limited furnishings, and some maintenance work is still to be completed. This does not provide a consistent good standard of accommodation that young people can be proud of, although the impact on young people is minimal.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Safeguarding young people is a priority of the staff team and central to their practice. Young people are supported to keep safe. Adequate levels of supervision both inside and outside the home recognise their significant vulnerability. Staff are proactive and safeguarding strategies include and engage young people so there are generally improvements in their behaviour. For example, in social skills and night time routines. Whilst the service has not had to make a child protection or safeguarding referral, there are policies and procedures in place and staff demonstrate a sound understanding of any action to take should they have any concerns about a young person's safety or well-being.

Practice is informed by clearly assessed risks which balance minimising risks without impeding young people's independence. As a result, young people are not unnecessarily restricted when accessing the community and activities. The quality of relationships between staff and young people is positive and reinforces the caring atmosphere that can be witnessed throughout the home. Young people are assisted to develop appropriate behaviour through the home's behaviour management policy and strategies.

Young people are informed of their rights through a young people's guide. This ensures that young people can access the information they need. The service focuses on positive recognition and praise for young people for positive behaviour and achievements and staff are keen at seeing progress. This positive behavioural strategy means sanctions and physical interventions are rare. However, whilst there is a minimal impact on young people, these records, when used are not in line with

regulations.

There are established systems and structures to maintain safe practices and fulfil health and safety obligations. However, the service could not locate their generic and health and safety risk assessments. In addition, control of substances hazardous to health records are not sufficiently updated. While these do not currently impact on young people, they do not ensure the home is fully informed of potential hazards in order to reduce risks. Regular checks to the fire system ensures due care is taken in maintaining a safe environment. There are safe recruitment procedures within the home.

Leadership and management

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

The home is organised, managed and staffed in a manner that delivers sound, appropriate quality care that meets the individual needs of each child at the home. However, there are a number of shortfalls and whilst the impact on young people is minimal, there have been a number of breaches in regulations.

The management understand the weaknesses and strengths of the home. However, there is no development plan. As a result, there is no means of tracking the progress of the home, objectives and actions so that the management team are confident that the home is reaching its full potential.

Regular monitoring activities are conducted by the management and external monthly visits are carried out. However, these have not highlighted a number of shortfalls and do not consistently act as a sound mechanism to identify areas of weaknesses or identify action to improve the service in the interest of young people. In addition, they have not consistently occurred or been submitted to the appropriate agency.

The provider meets the aims and objectives in the Statement of Purpose, and these are understood by staff and interested parties. However, there are a number of minor omissions in the Statement of Purpose. For example, around surveillance used within the home, however, there is minimal impact on young people.

The service had three requirements and six recommendations from the previous inspection. While there has been some improvement around fire precautions, recruitment procedures and personal development plans for staff, there are still some areas that continue to be shortfalls. These are around mandatory training and records for sanctions and risk assessments.

Staffing levels are sufficient, and staff possess the competencies, skills and knowledge necessary for looking after vulnerable young people. Most staff have completed all mandatory training, although not all. Staff feel supported by the management and receive supervision and appraisal. Regular team meetings focus on young people's needs and current issues to share information appropriately.

Young people's records are well structured and are held securely and confidentially. However, on occasions some records are not clear and do not fully explain the action staff have taken, for example, in respect of some incident reports. This does not ensure that the home's records contribute to an effective understanding of the young person.

Equality and diversity practice is **satisfactory**.