

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Natalie Burton
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Provision subtype	Children's home

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Service information

Brief description of the service

This home provides short-break care and accommodation for five young people. A local authority owns and operates this setting.

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 is a good service that positively impacts on young people's lives. Strengths of this service are the staff, who are motivated, trained to a good standard and understand the complex needs of young people well. Parents report that young people using the service are safe and enjoy their stays. There are strong relationships with between young people, parents and staff. As a result, there is effective support to enable young people to develop socially and emotionally. Young people are kept safe by staff who follow guidance in care plans and risk assessments to ensure each young person's safety is prioritised. However, the homes behaviour management policy, internal monitoring records, and some aspects relating to accommodation need improvement.

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
34 (2001)	establish and maintain a system for consultation with children accommodated in the home, their parents and placing authorities (Regulation 34 (3))	13/12/2013
17B	implement a written policy (in this regulation referred to as the	13/12/2013

(2001)	'behaviour management policy') which sets out the measures of control, restraint and discipline which may be used in the children's home. (Regulation 17B (1)(a))	
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Recommendations

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

- ensure the home provides a comfortable and homely environment and is well maintained and decorated. (NMS 10.3)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people achieve positive outcomes within a caring and supportive environment. For example, some young people now access the community, attend and actively contribute to their own reviews and sleep in their own bedrooms.

Young people communicate in their preferred method during stays and make day-to-day choices such as foods, activities in and outside of the home, and helping to choose colours for the home. Staff communicate frequently with young people to reduce their anxiety and prepare young people for changes they find difficult, for example, transitions from one activity to another.

Young people benefit from healthy lifestyles during their stays; they eat a balanced diet and make choices on their likes and dislikes. Where young people have specific dietary needs staff follow this regime and contribute to planning where any individual progress could be promoted. Young people make progress, for example, in sleeping in their own bed, learning to be more patient and reducing episodes of challenging behaviour.

Young people are consistently stimulated in this setting. They physically benefit from an active and varied lifestyle enjoying picking vegetables they have grown, swimming, visiting the local butterfly shop and enjoying the variety of activities within the garden, such as the trampoline. As a result, young people's confidence, self-esteem and horizons broaden. Their self-esteem is increased because they are celebrated as individuals, supported, encouraged and praised throughout their day.

Young people enjoy and are keen to increase their independence in line with their ages and abilities. They partake in activities such as cooking with staff, going on activities within the community, and completing appropriate daily chores, all of which increase their confidence and skills. In addition, some young people are completing a travel-independence training course. For example, they may plan the route and visit a photography exhibition, then take photographs after. Young people benefit from increasing their independence.

Quality of care

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

Young people receive good quality care. They enjoy positive relationships with staff and are cared for by a motivated and dedicated staff team. As such, young people benefit from long term relationships to key people. Young people's needs are well understood and interpreted enabling staff to respond to discomfort and anxiety promptly. Staff are vigilant to any changes and signs to ensure young people's health, safety and welfare is promoted. For example, staff are aware of young people's mannerisms which indicate that they may be unsettled. Care plans detail individual needs and guide staff on implementing consistent and tailored strategies. Staff implement clear responses to a young people as described in their plan to distract potential challenging behaviour through using agreed sentences. This helps young people feel secure.

Young people are regularly consulted about choices such as activities or food. There are a number of established systems within the home that staff implement. For example, young people's meetings ask which member of staff they would like to support them and seek their views on whether they feel listened to by staff. Staff use a board to show what young people say with a photograph of them, this helps the young person as well to remember what they said. Staff actively listen to parents around young people's likes and dislikes. Staff consult parents through a satisfaction questionnaire, regarding for example, the types of activities their child would enjoy, and to gain feedback of the service. Photographs and individual communication books are shared with families. This reflects the view that young people are benefiting from the level of guidance and support they are given. A social worker said, 'Staff go the extra mile to be creative, committed and flexible.' Parent's feedback about the service is generally good.

Young people's personal care is sensitively managed to preserve dignity and afford privacy. Practice is child centred and personalised, the manager and staff analyse each child's needs and continually review the effectiveness of strategies. Staff are provided with the required training to meet young people's needs, for example, in first aid and additional specialist training.

The procedures for the safe and effective administration of medication are well managed by staff. Healthy eating is promoted and menus are balanced, taking into account young people's choices and a multi-cultural perspective. Staff communicate with other agencies, such as young people's schools, through the telephone and a link book. This ensures that all professionals working with the young person have clear and up-to-date information to provide the appropriate support to meet their needs.

The home is fit for purpose and young people have their own rooms for their stays. There is a plan in place to decorate young people's bedrooms. This is because their bedrooms lack a homely environment through general wear and tear. Other rooms

provide young people with good space and separate living areas, for example, if young people want a quieter space. Young people enjoy outdoor activities such as a swing, use of a large garden and trampoline. In addition, the home has a smaller outside area where young people are highly supervised by staff when displaying inappropriate and more challenging behaviour.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people who use this service have limited means of communication. However, feedback from parents and social workers is that young people are happy and safe. Staff are fully knowledgeable of children's vulnerabilities and know how to deliver intimate personal care safely. Parents feel the home cares for their children safely. An established system to chart and monitor body maps ensures information can be shared and explanations for any marks clarified.

Staff are pro-active in safeguarding children, understand their responsibilities and act within clear procedures where required. They have advocated for children where they have concerns and are confident members of core groups meeting to consider children on protection plans. In addition, there are effective links with the Local Authority Designated Officer. Young people benefit as they are protected in line with legislation.

Staff know young people well and often pre-empt a difficulty or divert young people when they appear anxious. Staff respond appropriately by reinforcing boundaries, using signs or symbols, or making agreed changes to how they support young people. The quality of relationships between staff and young people is positive and reinforces the caring atmosphere throughout the home.

The design and layout of the home provides for high levels of security for vulnerable young people. For example, some doors have keypads on them to occasionally restrict access when there is a risk, such as entering the kitchen with hot pans, or when young people present with serious safeguarding concerns. When these systems are in use, young people who are less at risk can show staff symbols or verbally ask to leave or enter a room so other young people's liberty is not restricted. However, this practice lacks in detail in the home's behaviour management policy.

Young people's risk assessments sufficiently identify potential risk to them and how these risks can be reduced. Therefore, potential hazards are adequately defined and addressed. Robust attention to minimise risks ensures young people receive safe care and enjoy activity time in the community. Children do not go missing. This is because they are well supervised by staff, both within and outside of the home.

The service's behaviour management policy effectively promotes positive behaviour. Staff use incentives such as toys, books and general positive encouragement to promote appropriate behaviour. Where young people have an understanding of consequences and are displaying inappropriate behaviour, on occasion staff

implement measures of control, for example, time out. Positive handling plans guide staff on responses to challenging behaviour, through providing young people with consistency and structure and identifying areas where young people may find certain activities difficult, for example, when staff know a young person is unable to focus on a task for more than a few minutes. As a result, young people benefit from organised and clear boundaries to keep them safe.

The building is kept safe from hazards and is well maintained to provide a homely environment. Health and safety checks, including checks of fire equipment are routinely undertaken to maintain a safe environment. Young people have personal emergency evacuation plans and practice evacuations to support a safe exit from the home in an emergency.

Young people are protected by a sound recruitment process. This helps to ensure that staff working in the home are carefully selected and vetted for suitability to work with young people.

Leadership and management

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

Young people receive care from a motivated and stable staff team. Staff work efficiently as a team and report feeling well supported in their role. They receive good supervision which enables them to discuss young people's progress and their professional development. Regular team meetings focus on meeting young people's needs and improving the care staff offer. Staff levels are sufficient for children's needs, and the team is flexible in their response to changes to the rota and cover required. In addition, the Registered Manager ensures there is additional staffing when identified to meet an individual child's needs. All staff receive good levels of training and annual refreshers on core training such as safeguarding and physical intervention. Young people benefit from being cared for by staff that are knowledgeable, suitably trained and supported to meet their needs.

The home clearly sets out, in an informative Statement of Purpose, the service staff can offer to the children, parents and interested parties. There is a child-friendly version, in a format accessible to children, which explains what they can expect. Developmental plans define areas for improvements that relate to the quality of care for children, for example, to improve the way the service involves young people in reviews and to work alongside the transition team.

Since the last inspection, the Registered Manager has met the one recommendation made. As a result, records of fire drills now record the time they are conducted. Young people benefit as they have practised what to do in an emergency.

Managers monitor practice and records. Plans are current and regularly reviewed to ensure the best support for young people. The monitoring reports submitted to Ofsted do not provide for consultation with children, placing authorities and parents. However, this does not impact on young people because their views are sought

during visits to the home. Independent monitoring visits adequately support overall improvement and provide young people with the opportunity to contribute their views.

The manager notifies all significant events about the safety and protection of young people to all appropriate parties. This ensures the service is transparent and accountable for its actions to promote young people's welfare. Young people's records are held securely and kept confidential. These records inform staff practice and help to underpin the care provided.

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* and the evaluation schedule for the inspection of children's homes.