

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Bill Drumm
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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

The home is run by the local authority and provides care and accommodation for up to six boys or girls aged between 12 and 17 years old. The home is registered to care for young people with emotional or behavioural difficulties.

Overall effectiveness

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

Young people benefit from being cared for by a helpful, stable and committed staff team who have a good knowledge base and sound values. Education is given a very high priority and actively promoted. Young people are also encouraged to become involved in a range of community based activities, which in turn helps to develop their self-confidence and social skills. Young people feel listened to and feel they can talk about any problems or concerns they may have. Young people and members of staff have a positive relationship which is based on mutual respect. Young people are both polite and confident.

The home is pleasant and welcoming and meets the needs of the young people. Feedback for this inspection from staff members and young people themselves is positive. There are some good examples of individualised care, and outcomes for young people have improved since they came to live at the home, particularly in relation to their health and formal education.

Not every young person has had their needs assessed prior to admission by their social worker and they do not have a formal placement plan in place. In addition, one young person has not been visited by their social worker at the home since their admission. Each young person has a care plan written by the home. The home's care plan does not show the full involvement of the young person in the process. Young people do not know how the home is trying to help them. In addition, keyworkers do not routinely monitor care plans to ensure each young person's needs are met and that they continue to progress. Reviews of each young person's care needs have been undertaken. The formal notes of review meetings are unavailable. As a result staff will not know what needs may have changed and who is responsible for ensuring they are met.

The home makes information available to young people about what it is like to live to live there. This information does not include the contact details of the different agencies a young person can contact if they are unhappy about anything. The home's independent visitor ensures that young people are regularly consulted about the running of the home. They do not however, consult with the parents or families of young people. This means that, young people are able to influence how the home is run although the opinions of parents and relatives are not borne in mind.

Young people who are nearing the time when they will have to leave the home, do not have comprehensive pathway plans in place, which highlight what their needs are and how they will continue to be met. Young people will not receive the help and services they need to support them into adulthood.

The home does not have a development plan in place. The home's manager and members of staff do not have a clear picture of what the home wishes to achieve over the coming months and how developments can be made to improve the quality of care 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
4 (2001)	keep under review and, where appropriate, revise the statement of purpose (Regulation 5)	31/01/2012
33 (2001)	interview, with their consent and in private, such of the children accommodated there, their parents, relatives and persons working at the home as appears necessary in order to form an opinion of the standard of care provided in the home (Regulation 33 (4)(a))	31/01/2012
12A (2001)	co-operate with the child's placing authority in agreeing and signing the plan for the child's placement. (Regulation 12A (1))	31/01/2012

Recommendations

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

- ensure that each young person's placement is underpinned by an up to date assessment of the young person's needs and family circumstances (Children's Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 5: Children's Homes; paragraph 3.2)
- ensure that the results of all statutory reviews and reviews of placement plans are recorded on the young person's file (NMS 25.8)
- ensure that each young person is visited by their social worker at the frequency expected by regulations (NMS 25.6)
- ensure that each young person's placement plan is monitored by a key worker

(NMS 25.2)

- contribute to the development of each young person's pathway plan and work collaboratively with the young person's social worker or personal advisor in implementing the plan (NMS 12.2)
- record what types of interventions have been effective in the past in changing and improving a young person's behaviour (Children's Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 5: Children's Homes; paragraph 2.93)
- revise the Runaway and Missing from Home and Care Protocols (RMFHC) (Children's Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 5: Children's Homes; paragraph 2.80)
- write a development plan for the future of the home (NMS 15.2)
- ensure that young people understand the purpose and content of their placement plan. (NMS 25.1)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people living at the home are encouraged to learn new things and to experience new activities. Recent activities undertaken with young people include golf, hill walking and attending a young person's focus group. The recent focus group addressed the issue of bullying. Participating in focus groups helps young people to understand issues that may affect them. Participation in outdoor activities help young people to stay healthy, grow more confident and to develop their self esteem.

Each young person has their own keyworker. Young people who returned inspection questionnaires said that they enjoyed the time they spend with their key workers. Keyworkers discuss issues affecting young people in their day-to-day lives at the home but do not monitor their individual placement plans with them. Young people do not know the purpose and content of their placement plans or how their needs will be met. The key worker system, does however, help young people feel listened to. One young person commented, 'staff listen to me', another said, 'the staff are friendly and helpful'. Young people enjoy positive relationships with staff members which are based on mutual respect and understanding. All young people are included in the home's social group and activities; this helps to avoid exclusion and feelings of isolation. Young people are friendly and welcoming to visitors.

Young people receive consistent levels of support to learn new things and to develop their self-confidence and independence. The home has a system of training in place, which it uses to help young people learn activities for daily living and to develop daily living skills. Young people are encouraged to take part in meal preparation and to prepare snacks. This helps to develop their independence and to prepare them more fully for adult life. However, not every young person who is eligible has a formal and comprehensive pathway plan in place. Young people will not be fully supported to move successfully into adulthood.

Each young person has an individual health care plan in place, which outlines what their health care needs are and how they will be met. The involvement of all healthcare professionals in each young person's care is fully recorded. All members of staff are fully aware of each young person's health care needs, and how they are to be met. Young people receive appropriate health care at times when they need it.

The education of young people is given a very high priority. Attendance at school, college or training is actively encouraged and supported. Young people of school age attend formal education and those who have now left school attend training. Attendance records are maintained and the achievement of young people is celebrated. One young person who returned an inspection questionnaire said, 'school's ok'. Staff offer on-going help and advice to young people to help them achieve their targets and to ensure they have the best possible life-chances as they move into adulthood.

Young people's files contain all the necessary educational information, including statements of special educational needs and personal education plans. This helps members of staff to understand the educational needs of the young people better and to promote their continued improvement.

Where appropriate, young people are supported and enabled to remain in contact with their families and friends. This helps young people to maintain relationships with those who are important to them and to maintain a sense of identity.

Quality of care

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

The home is currently being refurbished. It continues to provide a comfortable and supportive environment in which young people can develop both physically and emotionally. The home's care planning systems are not good. Two young people who returned inspection questionnaires indicated that they did not know what was in their placement plans and another young person when asked about the content of their plan shrugged their shoulders. One young person did not have an up-to-date assessment of their needs and placement plan, written by their placing social worker. In addition, the placing social worker has not visited the young person in the home since their admission, some months previously. Statutory reviews have taken place, but the formal notes of these reviews were unavailable. This means that, the individual needs of all young people have not been identified prior to their admission to the home, not all young people have received support from their social workers and their progress and changing needs are not formally recorded.

Young people's health and welfare is promoted and they are supported to lead a healthy lifestyle. Members of staff are aware of each young person's strengths and weaknesses and they provide a supportive environment in which they can develop their independence and learn new tasks. Members of staff display a warm, friendly and committed approach to caring for young people. Staff members offer advice and

support on how to stay fit and well.

Any young people who are ill or suffer accidents are quickly attended to. Members of staff encourage young people to lead an active lifestyle and to take regular exercise. One young person spoken to said, 'I like the things we do'. There are written records in place to show that young people eat a healthy, well-balanced diet. A fruit bowl was available for young people to access if they wish. Written records are maintained of all medication administered to young people. Overall, there is a good approach within the home to promoting the health and well-being of young people.

The home has a clear admissions process for young people, which is documented within their Statement of Purpose. Members of staff work hard to ensure each young person enjoys a positive experience while living at the home and is able to develop socially, physically and emotionally. The home undertakes its own assessment of need following admission and care services are provided to meet those needs. However, a lack of information from the placing social worker means that young people may not be placed in the most suitable home to meet their needs, and some of their needs will not be met.

The home has a detailed complaints process in place and young people are encouraged to voice their concerns. Members of staff said they listen to what young people have to say and that they try to resolve any issues they might have promptly. One young person said, 'I can make a complaint if I want, I can talk to anyone'. Young people are fully able to make their needs known and to raise formal complaints if they are unhappy about anything. This helps them to feel safe and listened to.

Young people enjoy living in a quiet residential area and are able to participate in a range of purposeful and enjoyable activities, which includes shopping trips, hill walking, sport and visits to local leisure centres. Each young person has their own bedroom and they are encouraged to make them as comfortable and personal as possible. There is a television in the lounge where young people can relax, as well as a pool table in the games room. One young person said, 'it's ok here. There's things to do outside but and if I want to stay in and watch television I can do that as well'. The home also has a dining area where members of staff and young people can socialise, enjoy a meal together and talk informally. This helps young people to develop their social skills.

Relationships between members of staff and young people are warm and friendly. Members of staff strive to provide an environment in which young people can be happy and flourish. One young person spoken to said, 'I know staff care about me, they're all ok really'. Young people feel comfortable at the home and understand that members of staff are there to help them.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

There are formal systems in place in the home to help ensure the safety and welfare of staff members, visitors and young people. When asked, one young person said, 'I feel safe here, why wouldn't I?' Regular risk assessments are undertaken and reviewed in line with changing circumstances or behaviours of young people. There have been a number of occasions since the last inspection when young people have been missing from the home. Written records show that the home liaises closely with the appropriate agencies and the incidents of young people being missing from home are reducing. The home does not, however, have up to date 'Runaway and Missing from Home and Care (RMFHC) protocols in place. The manager and members of staff are trained in safeguarding and they receive refresher training to keep their skills and knowledge up to date. This helps to keep young people safe and protected from potential abuse.

Members of staff promote a culture of positive behaviour within the home. Young people are supported to take responsibility for their actions and punitive measures, such as sanctions and restraint are used on an infrequent basis. Written records relating to restraint or holding young people do not detail what de-escalation or diversion tactics members of staff followed to minimise the possibility of the young person being restrained. Young people are, however, encouraged through reward systems, by members of staff listening to them and by diverting their attention to more appropriate behaviour. Young people are enabled to develop more appropriate ways to deal with any stress, anxiety or difficulties they may be facing.

The home's manager carries out regular checks of the home's fire systems, smoke detectors and emergency lighting. Young people take part in fire drills and the time at which fire drills take place are recorded. Regular checks of gas installations and electrical equipment also take place. Full written records are maintained by the home's manager. These measures ensure that young people live in a safe environment and their safety is protected.

Young people benefit from a very stable staff team. They are protected by the home's recruitment procedures and are kept safe from potential abuse. The home's recruitment process is thorough and helps to ensure that only those who are suitable to work with young people are employed. Visitors to the home are asked to identify themselves on arrival and to sign the visitor's book.

Leadership and management

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

The home's Statement of Purpose does not fully comply with regulations or national minimum standards. The names, and the length of time staff members have worked in a residential setting are recorded although their experience is not. In addition, the Statement of Purpose indicates that the home does not admit young people in an emergency situation. Young people have, since the last inspection, been admitted into the home in an emergency, and essential paperwork relating to their care needs has not been provided to the manager or members of staff. The home may not be the most appropriate place for the young person to live and the staff team may not

have the necessary skills to meet those needs.

The young people's guide describes the home and provides important information, which young people may need. However, the guide does not provide up to date information about the current regulatory authority or the contact details of each young person's independent reviewing officer. Young people will not know who they can contact if they are unhappy about anything.

Young people's files are well ordered. Written information retained within the home provides a record of each young person's life there as well as the help and support carried out by staff members. House meetings involving the young people take place at regular intervals and their opinions are listened to. Young people and staff members discuss activities that the young people may wish to try as well as different meals they might like to sample. This helps young people to develop their confidence, self-esteem and to experience full range of life experiences.

Monitoring visits from someone independent of the home take place every month. The person undertaking these visits talks, where possible, to young people and members of staff. These visits help to ensure that the home is run properly and that young people are well cared for. The visiting officer doesn't always speak with the parents or relatives of young people. The opinions of family members about the care the young people receive are not borne in mind. Young people contribute to improving the quality of their care.

Young people are looked after by members of staff who's knowledge and practice is not up to date. The organisation demonstrates a commitment to training all staff and in ensuring their training is current. Members of staff gain the skills and competencies necessary to look after young people and retain those which they already have.

Young people receive care from a well-supported staff team who are comfortable taking decisions. The home's manager ensures that all members of staff receive formal supervision on a regular basis. In addition, regular staff meetings are also held. One staff member spoken to said, 'the office door is always open if I have an issue I want to discuss and I don't have to wait until supervision'. This helps staff members to feel valued and supported in their work.

Overall, the home's manager provides effective management and has systems in place to ensure that the quality of care is regularly monitored. Any problem areas which may be identified are attended to and action taken. The home does not have a development plan in place. The home's manager and members of staff are unaware of the home's strengths and weaknesses.

Young people are given the opportunity to experience new activities and challenges. This helps them to develop their confidence and self-esteem. Staff members are motivated and are encouraged to create new opportunities for the young people living at the home. One young person spoken to said, 'the manager and staff are ok, they try and help me do new things and they're usually cheerful'.

Equality and diversity practice is **satisfactory**.