

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Jacqueline Malcolm
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home is owned and operated by a private organisation. It is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to four young people. The young people may have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties, including attachment problems.

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**.

Young people receive an excellent quality of care and they make good progress overall. Their individual needs are well met in line with their clear and comprehensive placement plans. Staff work effectively to help young people to understand their histories in a safe, nurturing and child-focussed environment. Young people's constructive relationships with staff builds up trust and good attachments over time. Young people are protected by clear routines and consistent boundaries that stabilise their lives and encourages them to thrive. Young people express their satisfaction with life at the home and they are developing into confident and sociable individuals.

All young people have excellent school attendance, which increases their ability to achieve and improve their life chances. Their health and emotional needs are well met and they make good progress to develop independence skills. Young people's leisure needs are promoted through their choice of community based activities, which stimulates their interests and helps them to make new friends. Young people's views are actively listened to and appropriately acted on. This promotes their rights.

Young people are well cared for by members of staff who have a very good understanding of the potential risks and vulnerabilities to their safety and welfare. They have successfully supported young people to manage some of their difficult feelings and behaviours. This has resulted in a decline in incidents of challenging behaviour. Young people say that they feel safe and protected. One young person said that they are cared for by adults who are, 'a safe pair of hands'. Professionals also consider the home to be a safe place for young people to live.

A qualified, experienced and well-established Registered Manager provides strong leadership to the staff team, who feel well supported. The manager takes personal responsibility for the young people's progress and drives improvement by ensuring a 'hands on' approach to childcare. This means that she is visible around the home and is approachable to the young people. She also promotes high expectations within the staff team and improves the quality of care through management monitoring systems. Professionals comment about the good communication that they share with the home. This ensures that young people receive continuity of care.

One requirement and two good practice recommendations have been raised as a result of this inspection. These relate to the review report on the quality of care, an aspect of recruitment checks, restraint books and records that pertain to statutory reviews. These shortfalls do not negatively impact on young people's good outcomes.

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)	supply a report in respect of any review conducted for the purpose of paragraph 1 of this regulation to the HMCI. (Regulation 34(2))	31/01/2014

Recommendations

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

- ensure that the registered person takes action to address any issues of concern that they identify or which is raised with them. This specifically relates to reviewing an issue in one recruitment file and implementing the new restraint book (NMS 21.9)
- ensure that the result of all statutory reviews and reviews of Placement Plans are recorded in the child's file, and individuals responsible for pursuing actions at the home arising from reviews are clearly identified. (NMS 25.8)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people make good progress in all aspects of their development. They benefit

from good placement stability and consistency, which provides them with a child-focussed and nurturing environment where they can make sense of their histories. This improves young people's confidence in the adults who care for them and strengthens their emotional resilience over time.

All young people enjoy excellent school attendance and their attainment is very good from their starting points. This is particularly notable for some young people who were unable to read and write when they moved into the home, but have since developed these skills. This significantly improves young people's learning outcomes and life chances and they enjoy the associated praise and rewards.

Young people enjoy good health and they live a healthy lifestyle. All young people are registered with the primary healthcare services and promptly attend health appointments. Young people engage well with therapeutic services, which supports their emotional health. Young people do not smoke or drink alcohol, which prevents related diseases in later life. They eat healthy, balanced meals, including fruit and vegetable and they exercise regularly. This improves young people's well-being and fitness levels which reduces the chances of them becoming unwell.

Young people are well engaged in community life and activities. Some young people have formed friendships with other young people in the neighbourhood. This integrates them into the community and teaches them the value of peer relationships. Young people enjoy a range of leisure activities, such as playing rugby, swimming, snowboarding, day trips away and holidays. These provide young people with new and fun experiences that support their social development and positive life experiences.

Young people enjoy regular and positive contact with their families and significant people. This sustains their important relationships, supports their cultural and identity needs and keeps them connected to the people that they care about.

Due to their young age, young people have some years to go before they can live independently. However, they learn practical skills that help them to be less dependent on staff. For example, young people are learning to spend and save their pocket money, which teaches them about the value of money. Young people learn how to maintain their personal care, keep their room clean and tidy and they help with domestic tasks around the home. Young people's positive relationships with adults and their peers help them to develop social skills in a safe environment. These activities benefit young people's future lives.

Quality of care

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

Young people are exceptionally well cared for by staff who have consistently high expectations for all of them. They enjoy living at the home where they continue to develop and grow within the confines of a safe and nurturing environment. Young people's strong relationships with staff helps them feel valued and to understand

what constitutes appropriate adult and peer relationships. Staff act as good parents to the young people. Their positive role modelling and consistency, coupled with young people's access to regular therapeutic support ensures that young people are supported within clearly understood routines and boundaries. Professionals comment positively about the quality of care that young people receive. For example, one professional said, 'I have no concerns in relation to the care the home provide for (name) who has now been there for just over three years. (name) has presented with some difficult and challenging behaviours and the staff within the home have always provided him with a high level of support and care'.

Young people's individual needs are clearly identified in their comprehensive placement plans and they understand them. All staff are aware of the young people's plans, which ensures that everyone is working together to promote their care and welfare. The staff team work hard to promote young people's needs arising from their personal identity and cultural background. This includes themed events at the home where young people's heritage is positively represented through education and food. This promotes equality and diversity and teaches young people to respect each other and celebrate difference.

Young people are actively encouraged to be fully and actively involved in the running of the home and they confirm that they feel listened to. For example, young people attend regular young people's meetings where they discuss subjects, such as their choice of meals, activities, house rules, bullying and other behaviour management issues. Some young people are active members of the organisation's children's forum. This ensures that the voice of the child is heard by senior managers in the organisation who have the power to effect change. Young people's participation in these areas improves their self-esteem and confidence. Young people are supported to contribute to their statutory reviews, which further enhances their positive sense of self and promotes their rights and responsibilities. Their access to advocacy services and social workers ensure that young people have independent people available to them should they wish to complain about their care.

The home has developed exceptionally effective partnerships with professionals from external agencies. This includes services, such as education, health and social care agencies. This helps young people to have prompt access to services that they need. The home is proactive in ensuring that they receive all of the necessary paperwork to help them care for young people. This is confirmed by a social worker. They said, 'I am in regular contact with staff within the home and (Registered Manager) and myself speak/email and meet on a regular basis. I am always sent all relevant paperwork and 'chased' if this is not provided!' This promotes young people's good outcomes.

Good medication management systems ensure that young people are safely administered medication as prescribed. This promotes young people's welfare.

Young people's learning is significantly enhanced by their excellent school attendance. Staff ensure that all young people are dressed in appropriate school uniform, which makes them look smart and well presented. Staff escort young

people to school, which ensures their punctual attendance. Young people say that staff help them with their school work, which supports their learning and promotes good discipline. Any difficulties that young people may experience in school are quickly resolved through good communication between the home and school. This prevents young people from being excluded from school and missing out on their valuable education. The manager is fiercely protective of the young people in her care. She ensures that potential barriers to young people's full participation in school are effectively challenged so they are not further disadvantaged. An example includes the home winning an appeal on behalf of a young person, which enables them to attend the best school for them. This is commendable practice and shows positive determination against all odds. It provides young people with a real chance to reach their potential and demonstrates that the home highly values young people's education.

Young people live in a well maintained home that provides a comfortable and homely environment that feels like a family home. One professional said that the home, 'feels like a home rather than a children's home, it's a normal house'. The lounge has been decorated in colours chosen by the young people, which provides a welcoming space. Young people have also been involved in personalising their own rooms, which reflects their unique personalities and interests. This gives them ownership of their environment. The location of the home provides suitable access to transport links, which enables young people to travel to school, contact and leisure activities. This ensures their full integration in the community and local area.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people's safety and welfare is actively promoted in the home. This is enhanced by the safeguarding ethos that is adopted by the home, which encourages young people not to keep secrets. This enables them to feel confident enough to tell an adult that they trust if they have any concerns or worries. Staff clearly understand their responsibilities to keep young people safe from harm and their training in safeguarding ensures that they are familiar with the organisations safeguarding procedures. Staff respond well to young people's vulnerabilities and they spend a lot of time talking to them about keeping themselves safe in the home and community. For example, discussion issues, such as 'stranger danger' and road safety awareness. Individual and clear risk assessments support safe care practices. They are regularly updated to ensure that good risk management strategies are implemented.

The manager has good communication with the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO). This ensures that safeguarding issues, such as allegations are promptly responded to and addressed. This provides young people with effective protection and support. Young people confirm that they feel safe. This view is supported by professionals who consider the young people to be safe. One professional said, 'during the time that I have spent with the organisation, I have had no concerns in respect of safeguarding'.

Bullying is actively discouraged in the home. Young people have positively engaged in targeted workshops and individual support helps them to understand the impact that bullying behaviour may have on others. Professionals recognise the work done by the home to counter bullying. One professional said that the manager, 'strongly promotes anti-bullying policies. She and other staff members work hard to encourage all children to support one another and to also understand how bullying behaviours and discrimination against others can impact on each other'. Effective measures in place to protect young people include good staffing levels, engaging young people in different activities and close monitoring of the young people when they are together. This minimises opportunities for bullying behaviour to take place and ensures that young people live in a non-threatening environment.

Young people do not go missing from home. Staff interactions with young people and the clear structures in place reduce the likelihood of this happening. However, if young people do go missing, staff know how to follow the agreed missing from care protocols to ensure young people's safe return. Although the home has good relationships with the local police and the manager actively encourages visits from them; they rarely visit the home, due to the lack of incidents.

Staff are well trained to manage young people's challenging behaviour. This includes physical restraint. However, the number of incidents of restraint has reduced over time. This demonstrates that the strategies used as prescribed in behaviour management plans are effective in de-escalating difficult situations before they reach crisis point. It also shows that young people can manage their own behaviours in more constructive ways. Records of restraint are maintained in bound books. However, due to the lack of space to ensure a full record of events, additional sheets have been added in some instances. This current practice does not promote a secure record of events. The manager has ordered some new restraint books in response to this issue. This does not have a negative impact on young people's safety and welfare.

Sanctions and rewards are used to promote good behaviour. This helps young people to understand the concept of consequences when their behaviour is negative. A number of recorded restorative and natural consequences help young people to make positive changes. Young people confirm that sanctions are fair and they enjoy the rewards in recognition of their positive behaviour.

Young people are protected by good recruitment systems with the exception of an isolated recording matter. The manager is looking into this to ensure clarity of information. All staff are vetted and deemed suitable to care for young people and they cannot work at the home until this is satisfactorily completed. Visitors to the home are appropriately checked and they are required to show their identification prior to entering the home. This protects young people from individuals who may present a risk to their safety and welfare.

Young people benefit from living in a safe physical environment. Gas and electric equipment is regularly checked to ensure that they are safe to use. Young people participate in fire drills so that they know how to evacuate the house in the event of

a fire. Health and safety risk assessments are up to date and the potential risks are identified and eradicated or minimised. These measures keep everyone safe.

Leadership and management

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

Young people benefit from living in a children's home that is effectively and efficiently managed. The Registered Manager is suitably qualified and experienced and she provides strong leadership to the staff team. The manager is visible around the home and she takes personal responsibility for the young people's progress and drives improvement by ensuring a 'hands on' approach to childcare. The manager promotes high expectations within the staff team and values their contributions in the development of the home.

Professionals comment about the good communication that they share with the home. This promotes continuity of care. One professional said, 'in respect of channels of communication between our department and the care home, I am happy with the quality of this and would acknowledge that any time we have required information from the team that this has happened quickly and efficiently'.

Young people's care is compatible with the homes Statement of Purpose. This is clear, accessible to stakeholders and it is comprehensive. Young people are provided with information packs prior to moving into the home. This helps them to understand how the home will care for them and provides useful information, such as the complaints procedure.

Young people live in a well-resourced home. They benefit from being cared for by a sufficient number of consistent and child-focussed members of staff. Staff are well trained and most of them have a nationally recognised childcare qualification. New staff understand the homes ethos and they experience good induction arrangements and mentoring support. The manager is very keen to ensure that the staff team have regular opportunities to access training. This helps to enhance their knowledge and informs their practice. This includes the manager revisiting the safeguarding policy to ensure that all staff clearly understand the role of the LADO.

Staff confirm that the support they receive from the manager is very good. One member of staff said that they think the manager is 'absolutely brilliant'. Staff are regularly supervised and appraised. This gives them opportunities to reflect on their practice and identify any additional support to meet their development needs. Staff also have good access to the manager and deputy manager outside of their supervision meetings should they need further guidance and support. Team meetings and daily handovers promote consistent practice and a learning environment that improves staff morale and a positive atmosphere where young people thrive.

The manager is committed to driving improvement in the home. She is acutely aware about the homes strengths and areas of development, which is supported by a

realistic and child focussed development plan. There were no requirements or recommendations made at the last inspection. This demonstrates that the home has capacity to improve. Good internal and external monitoring ensures that young people continue to receive an excellent quality of care and their safety is monitored. Good stakeholder feedback is incorporated into the report which informs further improvements. However, a copy of the most recent internal six month review of care has not been forwarded to Ofsted. Although there is no negative impact on young people's welfare, this does not enable the regulator to monitor the improvements in the home.

Young people's records are clear, detailed and show how they have progressed from the start of their placement. This ensures that young people have a record of their life at the home that they can access now and in the future. However, recommendations following young people's statutory reviews are not consistently recorded. This does not clarify who is responsible for pursuing the agreed actions. Young people's records are stored securely in the home, which protects their right to privacy and confidentiality.

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.