

## Inspection report for children's home

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| <b>Unique reference number</b> | SC035154           |
| <b>Inspection date</b>         | 07/08/2012         |
| <b>Inspector</b>               | Jacqueline Malcolm |
| <b>Type of inspection</b>      | Full               |
| <b>Provision subtype</b>       | Children's home    |

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| <b>Date of last inspection</b> | 24/02/2012 |
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## Service information

### Brief description of the service

The children's home is provided by a local authority. It is registered to provide care for up to six young people of either gender with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

### 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 good quality care and support. This is delivered by a child-centred, caring and committed staff team who can meet young people's diverse needs. Staff are competent, experienced and confident and know how to protect young people and improve their life chances. Child-focused management oversight support good childcare practices and all young people have made good progress. In particular, their health, education, behaviour, confidence and self-esteem. Young people feel safe, consider themselves well cared for, and respected. One young person consulted about their care said 'everything is as it should be. It's as close to a family scenario as you can get'.

Not all improvements made at the last inspection are met. These are in relation to the missing from home and complaints policies. Further breaches in regulations and shortfalls in meeting national minimum standards are identified. These relate to placement and pathway planning arrangements, minor damage in the home, the Statement of Purpose, children's guide and Regulation 33 reports.

## 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   |
|--------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| 24<br>(2001) | ensure that the complaints policy contains all the required information, specifically that no person who is the subject of a complaint shall take any part in its consideration, and the provision for dealing with complaints about the registered person (Regulation 24(2)(b) and (c))                                                                                                              | 28/09/2012 |
| 11<br>(2001) | promote and make proper provision for the welfare of children accommodated there. In particular, ensure eligible young people have a pathway plan and working practices are collaborative with young people's social workers or personal advisors to implement the plan. Any changes to the plan are notified to the young person's Independent Reviewing Officer without undue delay (Regulation 11) | 28/09/2012 |
| 11<br>(2001) | promote and make proper provision for the welfare of children accommodated there. In particular, ensure children are cared for in line with their placement plans and any changes to the plan are made known to the Independent Reviewing Officer without undue delay (Regulation 11)                                                                                                                 | 28/09/2012 |
| 33<br>(2001) | ensure a copy of the report required to be made under this regulation is supplied to the HMCI. (Regulation 33 (5)(a))                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | 28/09/2012 |

## Recommendations

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

- update the missing person's policy to take account of the local Runaway and Missing from Home and Care protocol (NMS 5.7)
- ensure that children who are absent from the home without consent but whose whereabouts are known or thought to be known by staff are protected in line with the home's written procedure (NMS 5.4)
- ensure the home provides a comfortable and homely environment and is well maintained and decorated. In particular, repair the shelf in the bedroom and replace the cracked mirror in the bathroom (NMS 10.3)
- ensure the home has a clear Statement of Purpose which is available to and understood by staff and children and reflected in any policies, procedures and guidance. In particular, amend the responsible individuals details, age and numbers of children who may be accommodated at the home. (NMS 13.1)

## Outcomes for children and young people

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

All of the young people have experienced significant difficulties in their lives. This has directly affected their confidence and self-esteem. However, young people respond well to staff support and encouragement and show increased levels of emotional resilience. Young people have a better understanding of their histories. Good placement stability for the majority of young people has enabled them to establish and maintain good attachments with the adults who care for and about them. Young people have a positive identity, particularly in relation to their culture, religious beliefs and sexuality. They are valued and respected as individuals by young people and staff.

Young people enjoy good physical and emotional health. They are registered and attend appointments with health professionals, such as the doctor, dentist and optician. Young people who need additional support to address their emotional and mental health needs have good access to services. The impact of these interventions is positive. Young people are involved in activities that promote their health and fitness. For example, horse riding, boxing and outdoor pursuits. A diverse range of meals promotes young people's health and nutrition. They have a say in the meals provided and some young people prepare their own meals. This supports their preparation for independence.

Young people benefit from good school and college attendance and have made good progress. A number of young people are waiting for their exam results and all have college placements. All young people have high aspirations and intend to reach their future goals. Young people are showing a keen interest in, or are already studying towards their chosen professions. Examples include social care, engineering, sport and fitness, and forensic science. One young person said 'I want to get as far as I can'. Young people, where English is not their first language are developing their verbal and written language skills at college.

Young people enjoy an excellent social life. They benefit from individual leisure interests in the community and have developed friendships. This promotes their social inclusion, confidence and minimises anti-social behaviours. Examples of activities include dance, club memberships and cadets, swimming, cinema and activity based holidays. Young people are also involved in voluntary and part-time work, using their initiative with staff support to make a positive contribution.

Young people benefit from good contact arrangements. This enables them to stay connected with their family and significant people, maintaining their identity. Staff facilitate contact very well, often transporting young people long distances to ensure continued contact. Staff have developed some trusting relationships with parents, providing them with additional support during and outside of contact.

None of the young people who are eligible for a pathway plan have one. In some

cases, young people have not seen their pathway worker despite having one allocated to them. Statutory review recommendations are made to progress this issue so that young people have clear plans for the future. However, the local authority has not addressed this issue in a timely, child-focused manner. This is poor practice. Some young people are not as prepared as they could be without staff support, because their pathway plans are not completed or implemented. However, young people's independence is actively promoted and encouraged in the home. They are engaged in activities that promotes their independence, depending on their age and ability. Young people on full independence plans developed by staff are well supported and they are progressing well. Other young people are helped to understand the value of money, shop for small items, maintain good personal hygiene and clean their rooms.

### Quality of care

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

Young people are cared for by staff that know them well and can meet their needs in accordance with their placement plans. This is a strength of the home. Staff show pride in the quality of care that they deliver to young people, which is noted in young people's progress from their starting points. Comprehensive placement plans developed by the home demonstrates how the home will meet young people's needs. This takes into account the diverse needs of each young person, in relation to their age, race, culture, religion, sexuality, all of which are positively addressed and promoted. Young people know their plans. However, not all young people are cared for in line with their placement plans. Although staff continue to provide regular support and contact to these young people they are significantly undermined by the local authority who has not adequately responded to the issues. Statutory review recommendations have not been followed through in a timely manner. This poses a challenge for staff to implement any changes. Young people's progress and potential is impeded by the local authority's poor practice in this area.

Young people enjoy exceptionally good relationships with staff who also act as their key workers. Relationships are based on mutual respect and good care practices from positive adult role models. Young people recognise that they are treated well and know that staff care about them. Young people like the staff and say 'you treat staff with respect and they respect you'. Good behaviour management practices ensure that young people understand and respect the boundaries. Positive engagement between young people and staff, coupled with young people's individual interests and activities outside of the home promotes positive behaviours. Staff talk to young people about their inappropriate and anti-social behaviours. This ensures that young people understand the impact of their behaviour and make changes. Young people's good behaviour is rewarded and sanctions address negative behaviours. Young people say that sanctions are fair and do not favour one young person over another.

Young people's wishes and feelings are listened to. Their views influence their lives and the home's operation. Young people are involved in house meetings and have a

say on issues, such as meals, inviting friends to the home, holiday plans and plans for the garden. Young people feel listened to and have a positive sense of ownership of their home. Young people appreciate each other's strengths and weaknesses and have expectations of each other. Staff are good at helping young people to understand the times when their wishes and feelings cannot be met. Young people are encouraged to attend their statutory reviews and have their say. Although they do not always attend, their views are sought about decisions that affect their lives. Some young people are members of participation groups enabling them to have a say outside of the home. Young people know how to complain and are supported. Complaints made in the community are promptly addressed and maintain good relations in the community.

Young people benefit from good education support. Staff have high expectations of the young people and want them to achieve to their full potential. Staff engage in parent's evenings and are up to date with young people's progress. Young people say that they are helped with their homework. One young person said that during their revision, they wanted to go out with friends, but staff encouraged them to complete their revision beforehand. They appreciated this support. The virtual school actively supports young people's opportunities to enhance their life chances through education. Good health advice and support ensures that young people understand their physical, emotional and sexual health. Most maintain a healthy lifestyle through a healthy, balanced diet and regular activities that promote good fitness levels. Contact with the looked after children nurse ensures ongoing assessment and monitoring of young people's health needs.

Young people live in a home environment that provides them with a secure environment. The home is clean and decorated to a good standard, providing young people with a homely space. Some minor damage has not been promptly responded to, such as the cracked glass in the bathroom and a dislocated shelf in one of the bedrooms. Young people personalise their rooms and are responsible for keeping their rooms tidy. They say they like the home, but would prefer more indoor games. The manager is aware about these requests.

## **Safeguarding children and young people**

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

Young people say that they feel safe and relate well to each other most of the time. Staff are clearly aware about young people's vulnerabilities in a range of situations. They act as responsible parents and protect young people from harm, including bullying and abuse. Staff are good at minimising risks to young people's safety and welfare. Young people say that staff talk to them about keeping safe and external safeguarding support is provided to young people who need it.

No young people have been reported missing from the home for some time, but if they did, there is no agreed protocol in place. Not all young people are fully protected when they are absent from the home unauthorised. The local authority has not made proper arrangements to fully satisfy themselves that unauthorised

absences are risk assessed and safe. This is irrespective of the young person's age, wishes and feelings. Staff continue to have positive engagement with young people who absent themselves from the home. This is commendable. It ensures some level of monitoring, but it does not address the fundamental issues in relation to care planning and risk management arrangements.

Young people demonstrate good manners and know how to behave in social situations. Negative behaviours are well managed by staff who understand young people's behaviours and triggers. Clear behaviour management plans and risk assessments ensure that young people's behaviours are managed and cared for in a consistent way, which is balanced and reflect their presenting behaviours. Staff training has a clear focus on de-escalating situations before they reach crisis point. Young people confirm that they are not restrained and they have not seen this happen to other young people.

No new staff have been recruited to the home for three years. The manager is trained in safer recruitment to ensure robust vetting of applicants. Visitors to the home are properly checked before entering the premises and they are monitored. These measures protect young people from people who may cause them harm.

Young people benefit from up to date health, safety and fire checks that promotes a safe home environment.

## **Leadership and management**

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

The Registered Manager is competent, experienced and child-focused. She is well deputised and supported by a well-established diverse and sufficient staff team. The team is confident about their ability to provide good outcomes for young people and meet their diverse needs. This is despite some challenges faced by the team when the local authority has not promptly addressed care planning and welfare issues. Young people are well cared for because staff understand their roles and responsibilities and care about them. This is reflected in the positive comments made by young people, in particular their comments that conclude that they are treated with care, respect and fairness. One young person said about life at the home. 'It's all good'. Professionals comment positively about the home and are satisfied with the quality of care and support provided.

Most staff have a childcare qualification or are working towards completion. Staff benefit from further training and feel supported through formal supervision and informal management and peer support. Staff express good levels of satisfaction about their work and continue with their personal development. The manager is aware about the strengths and weaknesses and has an active development plan. Staff are delegated tasks to ensure prompt service delivery. This also enables staff to utilise their knowledge, experience and positive relationships with young people and their parents.

Management monitoring addresses daily practices and identifies most areas for improvement, patterns and trends. Monitoring undertaken by an independent visitor and counsellor provide a good evaluation of the quality of care experienced by young people. Consultation with parents and relatives has commenced. This enables the visitor to form an opinion of the standard of care provided in the home. However, reports arising from these visits have not been received by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector since January 2012.

Previous requirements and recommendations are not all met. The requirement in relation to updating the complaints policy has not been addressed. A good practice recommendation in relation to the missing from home policy is not yet resolved. These issues are repeated to improve outcomes for young people.

The Statement of Purpose has not been reviewed to reflect the changes to the responsible individual. The children's guide contains some inaccurate information with respect to age and numbers of young people who may be placed at the home.

Young people's files are well ordered and provide a good account of their progress.

## 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.