

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Malcolm Stannard / Nicholas Murphy
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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 children's home is provided by a local authority and cares for up to six young people of either gender. The home is registered to care for young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Overall effectiveness

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

The home provides good individualised care for young people in accordance with detailed care and placement plans which are frequently reviewed. The staff group is stable, experienced, and well supported. This means that they can meet the needs of the young people with confidence and skill. The overall ethos of the home, strongly promoted by the manager, is that it provides a warm, caring, nurturing and safe environment.

Young people are happy and are making good progress. There are some shortfalls in recording and monitoring but these do not have a significant impact on outcomes for the young people. One young person, when asked if they had anything in particular to say about the home, said 'no, it's all good'.

Areas for improvementStatutory 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 that, as appears necessary, the person conducting the visits under this regulation, interviews with their consent and in private, the children's parents and relatives in order to form an opinion of the standard of care provided in the home (Regulation 33(4)(a))	31/10/2011
17B (2001)	ensure that the records of disciplinary measures contain all the information required, specifically the effectiveness and any consequences of any use of the measure (Regulation 17B(3)(f))	30/09/2011
24 (2001)	ensure that all complaints are recorded (Regulation 24(5))	30/09/2011
24 (2001)	ensure that the complaints policy contains all the required information, specifically that no person who is the subject of a	31/10/2011

	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))	
23 (2001)	ensure that all parts of the home to which children have access are free from hazards, and that any activities in which children participate are free from avoidable risks, specifically that risk assessments in respect of the building and activities are carried out. (Regulation 23(a) and (b))	31/10/2011

Recommendations

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

- ensure that the record of missing persons contains all the relevant information (NMS 5.10)
- ensure that the regular monitoring reports by the registered person include the identification of patterns and trends (NMS 21.2)
- modify the children's guide to include details of how to contact the Children's Rights Director and their independent reviewing officers (NMS 13.5)
- 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 the home's log does not contain confidential information about young people (NMS 22.3)
- review the current state of the floor covering. In particular, the worn stair carpet. (NMS 10.3)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people have a strong sense of identity with their cultural backgrounds and those that wish to are fully supported in following their religious beliefs.

Young people have good attendance at school, although some of them do not achieve to their potential. Some of the young people are following vocational courses which they find enjoyable and rewarding.

Young people are healthy and are developing well, physically and emotionally. One young person is working towards independence and being equipped with the skills which will enable them to live alone. All young people have full and active lives outside the home, and take part in a wide range of recreational and leisure activities. As a result, young people have developed visible improvements in their self-esteem

and confidence. Where appropriate, young people are enabled to have contact with family and others significant to them.

Quality of care

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

The planning for each young person is highly individualised and takes full account of their needs. Each young person has a keyworker who spends regular time with them. This makes sure that each young person's views are fully incorporated into their plan.

Staff ensure that the views of young people are taken into account in everyday life within the home. For example, the young people said that they did not want to go on a group holiday this year as they all had different ideas about where they wanted to go. As a result, the manager changed staff rotas to enable each child to have the holiday of their choice with their keyworker and other staff.

The behaviour of the young people is generally very good. The therapeutic model of care within the home is effectively promoted by the manager and applied consistently by staff. This ensures that young people are better able to deal with difficulties and to develop good relationships with others. The home prefers to use incentives to reward good behaviour rather than sanctions. However, when a sanction is used the record does not indicate how effective it has been. This makes it more difficult to evaluate its overall impact and whether it should be used again in the future for that young person.

The staff have high aspirations for the young people and are fully prepared to advocate for them. One member of staff was concerned about a particular behaviour management strategy being used by a young person's school which they felt was not helpful to the young person. They successfully negotiated with the school to change their approach which has resulted in an improvement in that young person's behaviour.

Staff attach exceptionally high priority to meeting needs arising from cultural or ethnic difference. For example, one young person, an unaccompanied asylum seeker, has been fully supported to follow their religion. The young person is also being supported in making links with people within the community who share their language and cultural heritage.

The home is comfortable and homely. It has recently been redecorated. The quality of furnishings is generally good, though the stair carpet is worn.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people feel safe and the staff group are competent at recognising possible causes for concern and acting appropriately to report them if necessary. Bullying within the home is infrequent but when it does occur staff are very quick to address it. Young people say they know who they need to go to if they have a concern or complaint. However, the complaints procedure does not describe how complaints about the staff or manager are dealt with. This means that young people and others cannot be fully confident that these complaints will be handled properly. Also, not all complaints have been recorded.

There are comprehensive risk assessments for each young person which are effective in identifying potential risks (both to the young person and to others) and how they can be managed. They take full account of each young person's needs and are regularly reviewed. However, arrangements for assessing general risks within the building, and while on activities, are weak. This exposes young people and staff to potential threats to their safety and well-being.

There are very few incidents of young people going missing. There is a joint policy on missing young people between the local authority and the police. However, this has not been updated to take account of current guidance. This means that children who go missing are not fully protected. Additionally, the record kept by the home does not contain all the required information, which makes it harder to address the causes of young people going missing.

Leadership and management

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

The manager has a strong and consistent focus on children's needs which is shared by the staff and reflected in daily practice. She summed up what the home did well by saying 'each young person knows that they're important, special and cared for'.

Staffing levels are good and enable the home to meet the needs of the young people. Staff are competent, well trained, and have access to ongoing training which promotes their development. The manager and senior staff support the staff effectively through both formal and informal supervision.

The manager has clear ideas about how she wants the home to develop further and these are contained within a written self-assessment.

The home operates to its Statement of Purpose. The children's guide is clear and easy to read. However, it does not contain information about how to contact certain people outside the home, which makes it more difficult for young people to express concerns they may have.

Monitoring of the home has some weaknesses. The manager's own monitoring contains an overview of incidents and other data, but does not identify patterns and trends. This means that opportunities to improve outcomes for young people are lost. In addition, the person visiting the home on a monthly basis does not seek the

views of parents or relatives about the quality of care provided. This means that shortfalls in the quality of care are less likely to be identified and put right.

Records are kept securely. However, a recommendation was made at the last inspection that staff should not use the log book to record information about individual young people. This is because it is left open on the office desk, may be seen by young people and visitors, and thus lead to a breach of confidentiality. This practice is still evident and so the recommendation has been repeated.

Equality and diversity practice is **outstanding**.