

## Inspection report for children's home

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| <b>Unique reference number</b> | SC035477        |
| <b>Inspection date</b>         | 07/10/2013      |
| <b>Inspector</b>               | Stephen Trainor |
| <b>Type of inspection</b>      | Full            |
| <b>Provision subtype</b>       | Children's home |

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|--------------------------------|------------|
| <b>Date of last inspection</b> | 11/03/2013 |
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## Service information

### Brief description of the service

This children's residential unit is operated by a local authority and provides care for up to six young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties. The unit takes emergency placements. Services have also been developed to support young people in need who are registered as refugees.

### 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 **adequate**.

Young people receive an adequate overall standard of care and education and this helps them to learn how to develop skills suited to building positive futures. Young people are encouraged to take responsibility for their behaviour but not all have been able to provide their fullest cooperation. Not all young people have shown that they can make good choices and this has meant the peer group dynamic has been difficult to manage between.

The service continues to respond to individual's presenting needs to resolve conflict positively and to safeguarding concerns quickly. Staff implement agreed strategies and protocols consistently to reduce risk taking behaviours. Individual support plans are well thought out and staff positively engage young people to look at their behaviours. Some good successes are noted with young people who have excellent college and school attendance and show that they are self-motivated to achieve the best from their placement experience. The home's management team also provided an overview of the challenges that some young people have created following their introductions. There is clear evidence to show that a better matching process is needed especially when emergency placements are accepted.

The home's management remain child focussed. There is a positive relationship established with the police missing from home coordinator. Some safeguarding concerns prevail especially when young people are missing from the home. Risk-taking behaviours are reviewed frequently ensuring placement and behaviour management plans remain up to date. Young people are encouraged to adopt

different routines. Some young peoples behaviours have forced placements to be terminated.

Individuals are clear about their placement arrangements, being aware of plans and programmes. An efficient keyworker system is operated. The promotion of young people's health and well-being is managed well through consistent staff practice. Contact arrangements are coordinated well. Meetings and reviews are frequently convened to discuss individuals' arrangements. Young people's views are being listened to. Many positive views have been expressed by partners about the quality of support being provided.

Staff remain committed to providing the best possible experiences to secure positive outcomes for young people. Monitoring of practice as well as the home's operation and management is in line with regulations. Reports provide suitable analysis of information and children's views, and this allows weaknesses to be tackled and strengths to be built upon. The home has a development plan that supports improvement.

The home reports all serious concerns transparently and the home's Registered Manager liaises directly with Ofsted to provide regular updates when investigations take place. There was a delay in reporting some concern when the manager was on leave. Partners, staff and some young people recognise that risk-taking behaviours continue to affect the home's operation and this means the full needs of all the young people are not always being met.

## 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   |
|--------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| 30<br>(2001) | ensure that the registered person, notifies without delay, any of the events listed in column 1 of the table in Schedule 5.<br>(Regulation 30 (1)) | 01/11/2013 |

### Recommendations

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

- ensure that young people are encouraged to take responsibility for their behaviour, in a way that is appropriate to their age and abilities (NMS 3.6)

- ensure that young people develop and practise skills to build and maintain positive relationships and resolve conflict positively (NMS 3.5)
- ensure that the care and support provided reduces the number of times young people go missing; in particular, strategies support young people to consistently make the right decisions and show that they understand the dangers and risks of leaving the home without permission (NMS 5.1)
- ensure that the children's home only provides admissions to children whose assessed needs they can reasonably meet; specifically, ensure that the combinations of young people living at the home can be supported and managed safely at all times. (NMS 11.2)

## Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **adequate**.

Securing positive outcomes and futures is at an early stage for some of the young people living at this home. Many successes are acknowledged for past and long-standing residents whose emotional development and self-confidence has improved considerably from their time at the home. Progress on an education front has been particularly good for some young people who have worked hard with staff to achieve their potential, sit examinations and move on to college. Young people also recognise that some behaviour are having a negative impact on them and could jeopardise their futures. Night time disturbances mean young people are going to school and college tired.

The personalities making up the peer group can mean relationships fluctuate on a day-to-day basis. Some young people display challenging, aggressive and damaging behaviour. Young people's behaviours are clearly captured within the home's records. There have been a number of emergency admissions and short term placements between inspections that impacted negatively on the home's stability. This is clearly evident within data sets provided by the home's management, the home's Regulation 33 reports and when reviewing notifications of significant events.

The management has shown that it can respond to challenges, work effectively with different partners to reduce risks and afford suitable safeguards for children and young people. Some strategies used to support behavioural change have been successful whilst other strategies have not been as effective. Some of the young people presently living at the home show little commitment to their plans. A number of placements have ended abruptly between inspections. The perseverance displayed by staff is acknowledged but shortfalls are evident in ensuring the peer group remains manageable at all times. Referral and introduction procedures are a key area for improvement.

Staff work hard to ensure young people build resilience to their personal circumstances. Young people are being encouraged to take responsibility for their behaviour and a range of plans support individual growth and development. Some young people have gained confidence in their placements and are more open to talk

through matters affecting them allowing them to build new coping skills. A good example is in the cooperation extended to key workers during individual work sessions. Young people show a willingness to learn from the support being provided. The range of subjects covered has improved young people's self-knowledge.

Staff recognise that to minimise underachievement a suitable structure to young people's daily routine will have to be established. Encouragingly, young people are listening to staff and are showing improved levels of engagement. Young people living at the home are treated fairly and staff work hard to support their individual needs. Young people gain benefits from the high levels of emotional support that they receive. This is particularly evident in maintaining contact and relationships with family members.

Young people enjoy good health and usually select to follow a healthy lifestyle. Young people have benefited from smoking cessation and drug awareness work. Health plans make clear any risk associated with illegal substances. Young people learn how to take responsibility for their health and make clear links between diet and exercise. Regular activities ensure they remain physically active. Young people attend their appointments with health professionals.

## **Quality of care**

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

Young people usually enjoy good relationships with staff which enable them to engage more positively and learn how to make better choices. Staff are skilled and show good insight and understanding of young people's needs. As a result, young people grow to appreciate and value the efforts of staff and learn how to work closer with them in planning their futures.

Staff act upon care plans and offer support to young people that positively influences their behaviour. Young people are confident to express their views in their statutory reviews. Staff practice supports young people to maximise their contributions. Some young people need to develop and practise skills to enable them to resolve conflict positively.

Individual plans are of a good quality, reflecting young people's needs and charting their progress. Social workers receive frequent progress updates. All achievements are celebrated and this continuously builds young people's self-esteem. Young people receive rewards for their efforts. Some creative ways of working and use of incentives help focus young people in their placements. Although staff take a pro-active approach to keeping young people safe, further work is needed to ensure young people have the skills and knowledge to take responsibility for their behaviour in line with their age and development.

Partnership arrangements work well, and communication between staff, young people and their parents, social workers and other professionals is clear. This results in good coordinated support when young people are most in need. Consistent

practice reduces any potential confusion with the arrangements in place for the young people. Young people receive clear support, instruction and updates to help them manage any anxieties they might have. This is particularly relevant at the start of a placement. Rules and routines are clearly outlined.

Staff 'champion' many areas of work including education. Developing educational potential forms a clear part of the home's philosophy of care. Care staff continuously emphasise the importance of young people gaining the best education. Not all the young people have shown that they can commit to their education and improve attendance. A flexible and creative approach is being tried to encourage attendance and achievements. Young people also gain different learning opportunities from participation in programmes allowing them to gain certificates of personal competence.

Young people understand how to make a complaint. They confirm that complaints, if made, would be responded to in full. A written guide covers complaints, with information, guidance and contact details of agencies such as Ofsted, children's rights and the Children's Rights Director. Young people can differentiate between 'grumbles' and serious complaints. No complaints had been made between inspections.

Healthy lifestyles are promoted to ensure young people can make informed decisions on how they can keep themselves safe and understand the impact that illegal substances, smoking and alcohol can have on their well-being. Medication is stored safely, and records are maintained on the administration of medication. There are clear policies and procedural guidance and these are followed in practice. Young people, in line with risk assessments, can administer their own medication. All staff receive suitable training to support health and well-being and this maintains the quality of care being provided.

Staff engage young people in activities to develop individual potential and enhance learning opportunities. A suitable recreation budget is provided. Young people's engagement in interesting pastimes and hobbies remains central to staff practice to reduce boredom and incidents of them going missing from home.

## **Safeguarding children and young people**

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

Some safeguarding matters and serious concerns are outlined within notifications sent to Ofsted. Young people have placed themselves in dangerous situations and there have been a number of occasions when young people's challenging behaviour led to police and court intervention. Staff engage in meetings and reviews that take place with partners to agree actions needed to safeguard young people. Some placement needed to be terminated between inspections.

Young people confirm that they feel safe living at the home. Young people have suitable safeguarding and complaints information and they are made aware of the

content of this information by key workers. Staff receive regular training to update their knowledge and have a good understanding of safeguarding policies, procedures and the actions they should take when an incident arises. Staff make it very clear that young people will not suffer any recrimination if complaints and grumbles are made. There have been no complaints and most young people show that they value the support staff provide.

Systems for dealing with young people who go missing from home are well established and a protocol is set out. Risk assessments take account of young people's potential to go missing. Reports made to local police are in line with the established protocol. An increase in the number of young people going missing elevated some risk ratings. There is regular communication between the home and the local police missing from home coordinator to review matters affecting the safety of young people. The home is awaiting confirmation of the contact details of a newly appointed missing from home coordinator. Partners remain concerned about some of the risk taking behaviours when young people are in the community. The home maintains detailed records each time young people go missing and management review all incidents in an attempt to further reduce risk. This includes providing young people with the opportunity to reflect on incidents they are involved in and this helps them to change their behaviours.

Staff uphold children's rights. Young people respond well to praise and there is good use of positive reinforcement, incentives and rewards as opposed to the use of sanctions. Staff are clear that physical intervention is very much a last resort. There had been an increase in the use of physical intervention. All incidents are evaluated to ensure no measure of control or discipline is excessive or unreasonable. All staff receive regular and refresher training in positive handling techniques to ensure safe practice.

Good recruitment practice is consistently being followed. Robust procedures ensure each staff member has an enhanced Criminal Records Bureau check prior to working at the home. Good practice also ensures the vetting of visitors to safeguard young people.

Health and safety are managed well, ensuring young people and staff remain safe in the home. Regular servicing of equipment, and routine safety checks maintain a safe environment. Young people have caused damage to property, furnishings and fixtures. A maintenance list is used to highlight repair work. Young people know what to do in the case of an emergency and can exit the home safely. Staff implement a range of risk assessments to identify and minimise hazards. Fire safety is a clear focus for staff following a notifiable event. Fire and Safety Services visited the home in connection with an incident to ensure all areas that children have access to are so far as reasonably practicable free from hazards to their health and safety. An amendment to the premises fire risk assessment had also been made due to a broken fire door.

## **Leadership and management**

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

The Registered Manager works closely with the responsible authority and Ofsted to ensure effective sharing of information. Some enhancements had been made to the home's practice between inspections. There is a clear vision for how the home should operate and achieving positive outcomes remains central to all practice. Some training covering the Ofsted inspection framework, evaluation schedule and grade descriptors was provided and this helps to keep staff practice outcome focussed.

Many of the young people develop meaningful and lasting attachments because of the supportive management culture and the hard work of the staff. Young people are gaining benefits from experiences provided by a competent staff team. It is a strong, child-focused service that provides many experiences for young people to develop and maximise their potential when they select to do so. Staff are responsive to the specific needs and specific circumstances affecting young people and their families. The home's management is also supporting a community cohesion forum following some neighbourhood disturbances. This is helping young people to remain safe when out with their friends.

This service is managed by an experienced and qualified manager. All partners confirm communication is effective. Staff morale is good and energy levels remain high. The responsible authority is reviewing staffing within its range of residential services and this will lead to a realignment of staff and management into different posts. The present staff team clearly 'go the extra mile' to provide the best possible experiences. Young people gain optimum benefits from a capable staff team. All staff hold a relevant level 3 qualification.

The young people have full confidence in the staff and know who is responsible for them at all times of the day and night. Staffing levels are maintained. Staffing levels increase if behaviours and risk dictate. There is no use of agency staff. Shift patterns help improve continuity with routines and procedures. The staff team is consistently supportive, attentive and sensitive to the care they provide for young people.

Records at this home show good clarity in how staff are managed. Staff confirm that supervision is taking place. There is access to training and a training attended overview record is maintained. Systems for staff's personal development and appraisals are established and this helps staff to further enhance their skills sets. Staff's performance is evaluated by the manager and individual objectives are set. Young people contribute to the staff appraisal process.

Practice is developed by a management team that is perceptive in identifying the home's strengths and the areas where it could perform better. A written and verbal self-assessment of the service was provided. All levels of staff influence and shape the service with their ideas and initiatives. Some creative working practices were outlined. Some areas where improvements are needed were made clear by the home's management team. The home's management team reflect on their practice and the home's operation. The views of the young people, staff, parents, social workers and independent reviewing officers are being captured and these also

support continuous improvement.

Comments are being captured from staff and young people within reports produced following visits to the home under the requirements of Regulations 33 and 34. There is some evaluation of records and events and this is helping to develop the home. Reports highlight issues and concerns in a matter of fact way providing clear data on the home's present status. Actions being taken to address concerns and shortfalls are outlined. The full impact and value that living at this home has had on young people's lives is clear within these records.

Recommendations set at the last inspection have led to improvements with consultation processes and this has led to lots of feedback from partners on the quality of services being provided. Smoking cessation work has been successful in discouraging young people from smoking in bedrooms. Staff have had the opportunity to attend an anti-bullying workshop and young people confirmed that they have confidence in staff's ability to support them when they have concerns. The management team have a suitable system in place to ensure notifications of significant events are reported but on two occasions there was a delay in information being forwarded to Ofsted. Five notifications were reported in total. No complaints were investigated by Ofsted between inspections.

Staff practice is supported by written guidance, policies and procedures. Information is written in plain English. The home's Statement of Purpose provides information in accordance with regulations. The ethos and culture established fulfils the service's aims and objectives and allows young people to build resilience against the many challenges they face as they work towards securing a brighter future. Some young people need to work harder and provide improved levels of cooperation to support their development.

## 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.