

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Chris Scully / Mandy Williams
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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 provides care and accommodation for two young people, of either gender, with emotional behavioural difficulties. The home is managed by the local authority.

Overall effectiveness

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

This is a good home where young people are happy feel safe and are settled. Young people are making good progress in all aspects of their lives. This is because they receive personalised care which is effectively tailored to their individual and specific needs. Young people are positive about the care and support they receive and say that staff are always there for them to talk to. Young people are able to tackle problems in a constructive way, because of the strong and positive relationships they have with staff.

Young people have a say in their care and are very confident to discuss any issues with staff and other professionals to secure a satisfactory outcome. They are aware that staff may not always be able to address their issues, but know that staff will do their best for them. Young people are able to comment upon their placement plan and take an active part in the review process.

The home is effectively managed. The Registered Manager places a strong emphasis on providing a high standard of childcare practice. Records and documentation are generally well maintained, although there are some omissions within the medical records, complaints policy and staff details. Monitoring of the home is satisfactory; however, due to a change in format, some areas as prescribed in Schedule 6 have not been fully reviewed. This has resulted in one statutory requirement and three recommendations being raised at this inspection.

Young people are cared for by a trained and highly competent group of staff who work well together as team. The team has a blend of well-trained staff who have the right skills and experience to effectively support each young person. Staff are very knowledgeable about the young people in their care and want the very best for them. Staff are very proud of the young people's academic progress and effectively support their ongoing learning opportunities.

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)	maintain a system for the monitoring of matters in Schedule 6 at appropriate intervals. (Regulation 34 (1))	02/12/2011

Recommendations

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

- ensure the home is appropriately maintained, in particular young people's bathrooms (NMS 10.3)
- ensure the written development plan clearly identifies and planned changes in the operation of the home, resources of the service, or confirms the continuation of the home's current operation and resources (NMS 15.2)
- ensure records and documents are clearly record and in a way which will be helpful to children in the future when they access files; in particular records contain the required information such as medical records. (NMS 22.5)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people have a positive view of themselves and are fully aware of their background and family ties. They talk enthusiastically about their families and obviously enjoy positive relationships with them. They demonstrate increasing maturity and are developing a greater understanding of the difficulties they have faced in their lives. Young people feel able to talk to staff about their feelings and make decisions about the way forward.

Young people enjoy healthy and nutritious diets. They are confident in the kitchen and will often assist in the preparation of meals. As a result young people are confident to take recipes home with them and to cook with family members. A young person said staff are very supportive of their dietary needs and effectively altered the menu as there were a number of meals that they did not like, especially those containing onions. Staff now prepare separate meals without onions for the young person. Young people's health needs are actively promoted. They are encouraged to join local gyms and are keen to join local football teams.

Young people are registered with the appropriate health care practitioners and are confident to attend appointments by themselves or with the staff. Young people are generally healthy and have a good awareness of where to seek help or support should they feel unwell. Young people make informed choices about their health, such as their decision to continue smoking.

Young people are making good progress at school. Their attendance is very much improved. Young people are generally enthusiastic about school and feel that they are doing well. They say they enjoy school, but not the long journey each day to get there. They take a positive view to their education and value the importance of this. Some young people have volunteered to stay on after school to catch up with course work that they had previously missed in order to improve their grades.

Young people enjoy regular contact with their families, friends and those people who are important to them. They have access to a telephone within the home to make private calls, have their own mobiles and are able to use the house telephone. This means young people are able to develop and sustain positive relationships. Staff effectively manage contact visits in the best interests of young people, which promotes their safety and well-being.

Young people are being well-prepared to become independent and make a successful transition into adult life. They are routinely involved in the running of the house including shopping, cooking, tidying and managing their own money, for example, saving up for Christmas presents. Young people are confident to travel to and from school using public transport and are always on time for school. Young people are rightly proud of this achievement.

Quality of care

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

Young people enjoy positive relationships with staff which are built upon honesty, trust and respect. Young people say the staff are 'really good,' and feel that they can talk to staff about anything. Staff act as positive role models and use effective communication skills to encourage young people to develop socially acceptable behaviours. Staff put great emphasis on developing positive relationships with young people and understanding their individual behaviours. Social workers say staff are very good at managing young people's behaviour, which has enabled young people to consider the consequences of their actions.

Young people's views are actively sought by staff and are acted upon where possible. Young people are aware that on some occasions staff may not be able to grant their request immediately and are understanding of this. For example, young people have requested internet access in the home to support their school work. While this is not yet in place, they are aware that staff are working to have this installed in the very near future. Young people are pleased that they are planning a vegetable garden with staff.

Young people are very aware of how to make a complaint; they have raised four issues since the last inspection. All complaints are handled sensitively and young people are effectively supported throughout the process by staff and their advocates. This promotes transparency and means young people know their concerns are listened to and acted upon.

Young people are effectively cared for in line with their placement plans. The plans clearly identify their individual and personal needs and the arrangements for meeting them in practice. Staff effectively implement the plans and maintain appropriate records about young people's progress and experiences. Placement plans are reviewed on a regular basis to ensure they remain current. Young people are fully involved in the review process; their wishes and views are carefully considered and included within the revised plan. Consequently, young people feel they have some control over their lives and the decisions made about them.

Young people's health care needs are identified and included within their health care plan. However on some occasions it is not always clearly recorded as to the nature or severity of any allergies a young person may have. Although staff are aware of the allergy and say young people are proactive in ensuring all health care practitioners are aware of this. Medication records are generally well maintained although the current practice of using two different systems does not promote consistency and can lead to discrepancies. Young people have easy access to a wide range of health care practitioner to support their health care needs, such as child and adolescent mental health teams (CAHMS), smoking cessation and drug counsellors.

Young people are making good progress at school. This is because young people's education is effectively supported by staff who have high aspirations for them. Good communication systems between the home and schools, effectively promote young people's ongoing educational achievements and progress. Staff are very supportive of school, for example talking to young people about exclusions and how they may have handled specific situations differently.

Daily routines support young people's attendance and ensure young people are well presented and equipped with the necessary tools to engage in the various learning opportunities. Young people say staff help them to complete their homework, especially science. Young people are able to choose what they would like to do in their spare time. For some this is meeting with their friends and family, while others enjoy the opportunities to engage in activities with staff. Young people say they have enjoyed going to the cinema with staff. They feel it is positive that they have, on occasion, taken family members with them.

Young people live in a comfortable family home in a residential area. The home is clean and is generally well maintained, although some areas such as the plaster around young people's bedroom door frames are damaged and there is mould on the tiles and around the bath. This detracts from the homely environment staff are creating for young people. Young people have a sense of belonging and say they are pleased with the way they have organised their bedroom.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people live in a safe environment where they are protected from harm and

have a sense of safety and well-being. Young people say they feel safe here and cannot think of anything that needs improving.

Young people are protected as staff have secure understanding of the home's safeguarding procedures and the action to take should they have concerns regarding a young person's safety or well-being. Young people are confident to talk to staff about issues that are concerning them and are confident staff will take the appropriate action. This is evident from the swift, effective action taken by staff in response to information provided by a young person, which ensured their continued safety.

Staff provide young people with good advice regarding their personal safety, including potentially inappropriate friendships. This enables young people to consider the risks and make informed choices about who they associate with. Staff work well with social workers to help keep young people safe. This is supported by social workers who say staff are very good at keeping them informed about their young people.

Staff are aware of young people's vulnerability and risks they face in the community. They use clear, detailed risk assessments to help protect young people from harm. Staff successfully balance the need for protection versus enabling young people to take reasonable risks as part of their independence and development, for example, using public transport to meet with friends and family.

There has been a significant decrease in the number of incidents in young people going missing since the last inspection. Clear procedures are in place with the police should this occur. Staff feel the revised procedures are much improved and place a greater emphasis on them to actively search for young people before contacting the police. Positive behaviour is actively promoted. Currently the rewards young people receive far out way any sanctions imposed. Staff say this is a big achievement for young people. They feel young people are showing increasing maturity to different situations and are much more able to deal with difficult situations in a constructive manner.

Young people live in a physically safe environment. They are protected by a comprehensive range of health and safety procedures, risk assessments and checks. Staff carry out regular safety checks such as fire drills to ensure the premises are safe. Young people are very aware of the fire evacuation procedures. They evacuated the premises quickly when the fire alarm was activated and were able to tell visitors what to do in an emergency. The Registered Manager ensures young people are kept safe when work persons are on site. For example, they liaise with contractors to ensure work is carried out when young people are not present and all tools are locked away each evening.

Recruitment and selection procedures are generally robust. Staff are appropriately vetted prior to commencing work with young people. All visitors to the home are required to provide proof of identity, sign in and out of the home and are appropriately supervised.

Leadership and management

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

Young people live in a home that is well organised and managed effectively. The home meets the aims and objectives of its Statement of Purpose, which is updated when required. The young people's guide is comprehensive and outlines how a young person can make a complaint.

The external monitoring of the home through completion of monthly Regulation 33 reports is undertaken robustly. These serve to effectively highlight any shortfalls and assist the Registered Manager in identifying their priorities. Monitoring by the Registered Manager takes place on a regular basis but a recent revision of the format has resulted in the omission of some elements of the statutory requirements. For example, some documentation was omitted from a staff file. Written records in the home are stored securely and generally are well maintained. However, some, such as young people's medical information do not enable young people to gain a fuller understanding of their experiences should they access this information in the future.

The one recommendation from the last inspection has been appropriately addressed and there has been a significant improvement in the way staff manage young people's behaviour. The situation has significantly improved, as staff have received updated training and the use of rewards and sanctions have been reviewed.

The Registered Manager has a team plan in place, although this purely focuses on staff training and does not include the views of staff and young people. This plan does not contain sufficient detail to outline the home's objectives for the next year or to help drive forward improvements for the home. For example, it does not reflect the refurbishment of the staff sleeping in room and proposed increase in registered numbers.

The young people in the home benefit from a stable and experienced staff group. This results in them receiving a consistent approach that enables them to build trusting relationships over the long term with those that are caring for them. The home does not use agency staff and there are always sufficient staff on duty to provide effective support to young people. This is gender-balanced whenever possible. There are however currently two vacancies for support staff in the home. This has impacted on the general condition of the home and led to an increase in domestic responsibilities for the care staff. The Registered Manager is in the process of recruiting to both of these posts.

The Registered Manager demonstrates a commitment to training. Staff receive regular supervision and opportunities to attend training courses that are both appropriate and designed to expand their knowledge and skills. As a result, staff are positive, enthused and committed to improving outcomes for young people. The staff possess a range of skills, which effectively supports their management of young people with a range of diverse needs. However, the systems for recording staff's

training are not sufficiently robust. For example, an up-to-date record of all training attended was not available.

Young people have a sense of security and belonging. This is because they live in a home with a consistent team approach, which is stable and well managed.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.