

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Chris Scully
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home provides care and accommodation for two young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties. The home is managed by the local authority.

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 enjoy warm, caring, positive relationships with staff. This enables them to talk about any concerns or issues they may have and receive the right support and guidance. Young people feel empowered as they are able to put forward their views and wishes, such as a change in internet provider. This is because they are actively encouraged to have a say in the decisions that are being made about them and the running of the home. Social workers are extremely complimentary about the home. They comment upon the 'inclusive, consistent, supportive and welcoming environment.'

Young people say they feel safe and know that staff care about them. Staff have a secure understanding of the home's safeguarding and child protection procedures and know how to implement them. This means that they are able to protect young people from harm. There was one delay in reporting information, which was quickly rectified.

All aspects of care planning and practice are highly personalised and tailored to comprehensively meet the individual needs of each young person. This is supported by the innate understanding that staff have of each young person's diverse needs. Staff work in a coordinated way with young people, their family, schools and placing authorities. This ensures young people continue to receive the right help, guidance and support they need on a daily basis. Young people are doing well with regards to their education and are considering future learning and career paths. Social workers say they are very pleased with the support provided to young people, in particular their education. This has enabled some young people to achieve very positive examination results.

The home is well managed. The Statement of Purpose and young people's guide provide clear insight into the type of care and support each young person can expect to receive. Most records and documentation are generally well maintained though there are some minor shortfalls with regards to complaints and items placed in the safekeeping of staff. The home usually ensures the appropriate persons are notified of significant events. Systems for monitoring the quality and standard of care provided in the home are appropriate and provide guidance as to the areas for improvement. However, reports are not always sent to Ofsted within the required timescales and the views of others are not always sought on the quality of care provided.

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 (2001)	ensure if any of the events listed in column 1 of the table in Schedule 5 takes place, the registered person shall without delay notify the persons indicated in column 2. (Regulation 30 (1))	05/07/2012

Recommendations

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

- ensure young people receive prompt feedback on any concerns or complaints raised in particular the complaint record contains sufficient detail (NMS1.6)
- ensure where any sanctions are used young people are encouraged to have their views recorded in the records kept by the home (NMS 3.18)
- ensure the visit of the home carried out under Regulation 33 include the relevant checks set out in regulations and guidance. In particular young people and their families are consulted and the written report is sent to Ofsted within the prescribed timescales (NMS 21.7)
- ensure information about the young people is recorded clearly and in a way the will be helpful to them in the future in particular the recording of valuables held for young people and complaints. (NMS 22.5)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people greatly benefit from highly individualised support, which helps them to grow in confidence. They make very good progress and develop positive and realistic views of themselves. Young people have strong, trusting relationships with staff because staff value their opinions and treat them as individuals. Social workers say 'young people are settled' and the home provides an 'inclusive environment in which young people can grow and develop.' Young people say that staff help them to deal with difficult situations. Their emotional resilience improves as a result of the help they receive. Consequently, they are more able to deal positively with the issues going on around them.

Young people develop an understanding of healthy lifestyles, such as the importance of eating a healthy breakfast. They enjoy a generally healthy and nutritious diet. They are actively encouraged to try new foods which it is hoped will, 'entertain their taste buds and tantalise their pallets.' Some take pleasure in the opportunities to cook with staff and plan their weekly meals. They confidently inform of other young people that if they put things on the weekly shopping list they 'will make sure it goes in the basket'. Young people's personal care is good and they confidently take responsibility for their own needs.

Young people make informed choices about their health as a result of the excellent guidance they receive from staff. Despite the advice they receive on the dangers of smoking, using recreational drugs and other health care issues, some young people choose to continue with some of these activities. They have however started to engage with other agencies, for example child and adolescent mental health service (CAMHS). Young people are aware of other health services in the community that they can access if they want to. They are confident to ask staff to make health care appointments for them and to attend them on their own.

Young people make very good progress in their educational placements. Their preferences are taken into account, such as increasing the number of days they attend at school instead of college. They have real opportunities to study in areas that interest them and receive considerable support to help them succeed and achieve. Some young people have clear career paths in mind and are know what they need to achieve to reach their goals.

Staff are committed to the ongoing development of the service and enhancing the opportunities for young people. This includes encouraging young people to engage in a wider range of leisure activities and this promotes their social interactions and confidence.

Some young people are highly committed and want to succeed at school, having already achieved a number of GCSE's at good grades. They have shown dedication in catching up on work they have missed and have attended additional lessons outside of school hours to complete all their work. Young people are rightly proud of their academic achievements. They say, 'if it wasn't for all the help and support from the

staff I wouldn't have got as good grades. They helped push me on and I wouldn't have done this if I was at home.'

Young people have strong links with their families and other people who are important to them. They benefit from being able to sustain positive relationships with them through appropriate levels of contact. Staff work really hard to ensure that contact arrangements are organised so as to ensure the safety and well-being of the young people. Parents say the home works closely with them to ensure the young people's needs are met and they are able to meet regularly. This is echoed by social workers who say the home works very well with families. Social workers report that this is achieved by 'effectively supporting and facilitating contact arrangements,' and by providing 'appropriate and effective support.'

Staff prepare young people for independence at a rate that is appropriate to their age and level of understanding and this helps prepare them for a successful transition into adult life. Staff encourage them to become involved in the running of the home and to take part in shopping, planning meals and managing money. Young people are proud that they have opened their own bank accounts and talk confidently about why they need to keep their pin number safe. They say their next task is to obtain a passport which they hope will lead to 'a Caribbean holiday with staff.'

Quality of care

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

Young people enjoy extremely positive relationships with staff, which are built upon trust, honesty and respect. Consequently, young people thrive within a stable, nurturing and supportive environment. Young people say staff are 'compassionate, caring and are always there for us'. Social worker's report that young people live in a, 'really, really, supportive environment', which is 'inclusive and welcoming.' Young people are able to make good progress across all areas of their development because of their relationship with staff. Young people feel safe and have a strong sense of belonging. They enjoy lively exchanges with staff, especially when discussing who are the better cooks and their favourite meal which are curries and 'lamb in baskets'.

Young people's views are important to staff. Regular house meetings facilitate young people's opportunities to have a say about things, including activities and the menu. Young people are fully aware that on some occasions staff may not be able to grant their wishes, but know that staff will always explain why. Young people feel valued because staff listen to them and take on board their requests, such as, changing the internet provider. Young people understand how to make a complaint and know that staff will address their concerns. A record of complaints is in place and young people are able to sign and make comment upon the findings. However, on a few occasions the information lacks detail. This means the record does not always fully reflect what has been investigated or said.

Young people are fully included in their care planning and are confident to attend their review meetings. Staff have an excellent understanding of the diverse needs of each young person and plan effectively to meet these needs in practice. Placement plans provide a comprehensive picture of their personal needs. As a result young people receive a service which is effectively tailored to their personal needs, cultural background and personal identity. Placements are regularly reviewed to ensure they reflect any changes in their personal circumstances. Staff work very well with young people, their families and placing authorities to monitor and evaluate their progress.

Young people live in a healthy environment which actively promotes their physical health and emotional well-being. They are fully supported to develop healthier lifestyles. Young people are registered with the appropriate health care professionals and have a good understanding of where to seek additional support or advice. Young people take more responsibility for their own health as they are encouraged, where appropriate, to self-administer their own medication. Health care plans are in place and include all relevant information about the young people. This enables staff to meet their health care needs well in practice, for example, ensuring young people's immunisations are up-to-date.

Staff have high aspirations for young people's educational achievements and future employment opportunities. They create a stimulating environment that effectively develops young people's confidence in their abilities and skills. Young people talk enthusiastically about how staff support them to engage with their education and their attendance is good. Staff work effectively with other agencies to support and encourage young people's educational aspirations, such as looking at college and university placements and this supports consistency in care. Social workers say that young people have done very well at school and have 'lapped up the support from staff'. This has effectively enabled them to achieve their personal educational goals.

Young people live in a very comfortable and homely family house in a residential neighbourhood. The house is decorated and furnished to a good standard. Young people are fully involved in how the house is decorated. They are very pleased that they are able to personalise their own rooms, which clearly reflect their individuality. However, they are keen to point out that they did not choose the colour for the games room and are happy that being changed as a consequence of their request. The rear garden is well maintained and provides opportunities for the young people to grow a wide variety of vegetables with staff. This not only provides them with vegetables to cook with, but also gives young people the additional responsibility of caring for their produce.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Staff consistently ensure the welfare of young people is paramount. They enable young people to overcome any difficulties they may face so they have an opportunity to lead happy and fulfilling lives. Young people are seen in a positive and realistic light. They live in a safe environment where they are protected from harm and have

a strong sense of safety and well-being. Young people say they feel safe living in the home and there are no issues of bullying. Young people say they all 'get on ok' but some times 'we do argue, a bit like siblings do'.

Young people are protected as staff have a secure understanding of the home's safeguarding procedures. Staff are clear on the action to take should they have any concerns regarding a young person's safety or well-being. However, on one occasion there was a delay in notifying the appropriate persons. This was quickly identified and did not have an adverse effect upon the care provided to young people. Staff are fully aware of each young person's vulnerabilities and risks when away from the home. They plan effectively to ensure young people remain safe here. Young people say they would talk to staff if they were worried or upset as they know staff will know what to do.

Young people occasionally go missing from the home. Staff are very aware of the young people's vulnerabilities and potential triggers for being missing. They work effectively with police, family members and other agencies to try and locate young people. They contact young people via mobile telephones and encourage them to return by for instance offering to pay for a taxi home. Staff are proactive in contacting young people's known associates to try and locate them. Hence, young people return home quickly and safely.

Young people have clear and consistent boundaries. They know what is expected of them and what is unacceptable. Young people are generally polite and courteous to one another, staff and visitors. Incentive schemes work well as they are meaningful to young people. Staff provide clear, age appropriate explanations as to why specific behaviours are unacceptable. These discussions provide young people with the opportunity to reflect on their behaviour and consider different ways of handling difficult situations. Physical interventions are rare and sanctions have reasonable consequences. However, young people's views or their refusal to comment are not consistently noted within these records. This is important as it encourages the young person to reflect on their behaviour and demonstrates whether they think they have been treated fairly.

Staff carry out regular health and safety checks of the premises and obtain certifications for gas, electrical and fire safety checks. Staff ensure all visitors to the home are fully aware of the fire evacuation procedure and where to evacuate to in an emergency. Young people are protected by a comprehensive range of health and safety procedures and risk assessments, that are consistently implemented in practice.

The recruitment and selection of people working at the home is thorough and protects young people from having contact with unsuitable people. Young people are also protected by the arrangements for vetting and supervising visitors. The manager ensures staff have the skills and competencies to meet the needs of each young person.

Leadership and management

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

The home is led by a committed, enthusiastic and competent Registered Manager. Staff are well supported and have a clear understanding of their role and responsibilities. Through regular one-to-one supervision staff are held accountable for their performance and their individual development needs are identified. This means staff are able to request additional training, such as infection control, in order to enhance their skills to better support young people. Staff say they work very well as a team. Regular opportunities to meet as a team mean they are able to consider young people's progress and modify any plans to ensure they remain current.

The Statement of Purpose and young person's guide are shared with young people, their families and placing authorities. These are well written and provide a clear picture of the home's aims and objectives. This means placing authorities, young people and their families are well aware of the care and support young people can expect to receive.

The manager has taken positive action to address the three recommendations raised at the last inspection. The home now has a development plan in place to improve the service and the outcomes for young people. Records of medication are more robust and better safeguard the welfare of young people. Reports of the Registered Manager's monitoring are sent to Ofsted twice a year as required by Ofsted. Overall, the home has improved upon the organisation of the home and improve the approach to monitoring.

The Registered Manager has a clear and realistic understanding of the strengths of the setting and the areas for further development. The home demonstrates a capacity for sustained improvement based upon its performance over the last year and this has led to more positive outcomes for young people. The commitment to ongoing improvement is evident from the prompt action taken to rectify the shortfalls identified at this inspection, such as revisiting the safeguarding procedures with staff.

There are sound systems to review the quality of care each month. Monitoring of the home by the Registered Manager is generally robust. However, this is not the case with regards to monitoring by the responsible individual for the organisation. While action is taken to ensure the home meets young people's needs and promotes their welfare the views of young people and their families are not always sought on the quality of care. The home is therefore unable to fully demonstrate how these have influenced proposed improvements and developments in the service. Also reports are not sent to Ofsted within the prescribed timescales.

There are appropriate systems in place to notify the relevant persons of any significant issues with regards to the young people. However, on some occasions Ofsted has not been informed of a significant event, such as police involvement. This does not have a direct impact upon the care provided to young people as appropriate action is taken in response to these incidents.

Records and documentation are usually well maintained and provide clear insight into young people's time in the home. However, there are no clear systems in place for recording when young people deposit valuables, such as money into staff's safekeeping. This lack of procedure may lead to discrepancies in the accounting, although this has not happened to date.

Young people are cared for by a competent and highly committed staff team. Staff have a wide range of skills and experiences which effectively meet the needs of the young people living at the home. This is enhanced by the opportunities to attend a variety of training courses; such as domestic violence, mad, bad or misunderstood, suicide and self harm as well as all mandatory training. This means staff are well supported to meet the needs of young people.

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.