

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	18/07/2013
Inspector	Nicholas Murphy
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Provision subtype	Children's home

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Service information

Brief description of the service

This children's home provides care and accommodation for three children with emotional and behavioural difficulties. The home is operated 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**.

This children's home provides a homely and welcoming environment which nurtures young people and helps them to reach their potential. Staff care for young people as individuals, advocating for their rights to overcome any barriers they may face.

Relationships between young people and staff are excellent. Staff treat young people with consideration and respect, and promote their dignity. The home provides a number of ways in which young people can have a voice, both in contributing to their plans and in how the home runs. The main avenue for consultation is through individual sessions between young people and staff. One young person said, 'I enjoy spending time with my key worker. I can talk to her about anything.' As a result, young people feel valued.

The home is a safe haven where young people know they are protected from harm. Staff place the well-being of young people at the centre of their practice and celebrate their achievements.

There are several minor shortfalls in the operation of the home. These relate to the statement of purpose, storage of food and the use of sanctions. However, these have not had a significant impact upon outcomes for young people.

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
5 (2001)	notify HMCI of any revision to the statement of purpose within 28 days (Regulation 5(b))	30/08/2013
17 (2001)	ensure that the imposition of any financial penalty, other than a requirement for the payment of a reasonable sum (which may be in instalments) by way of reparation, is not used as a measure of control or discipline. (Regulation 17(2)(g))	30/08/2013

Recommendations

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

- ensure that avoidable hazards in the home are removed, specifically that part-used packs of food are marked with the date of opening. (NMS 10.3)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

In general, young people are in good health. They understand the importance of attending routine appointments such as opticians and dentists, and most make sensible lifestyle choices. The majority of young people choose not to smoke, and none use substances or alcohol.

Young people's attendance at school is good. Even when some young people have the occasional problem with punctuality, they have made marked overall improvements in comparison with their starting points. In addition, young people have achieved well in education. Some have increased their attainment levels over the past year, while others have gained qualifications which they never expected to.

Since coming to live here, young people have developed greater confidence and independence. They take some responsibility for keeping their own space clean and tidy. Some help out with more general housekeeping tasks, for example, mowing the lawn in the garden.

Young people are able to see family and friends on a regular basis, benefiting socially and emotionally from this contact. The maintenance and strengthening of these links also provides young people with support which will be particularly important when they move on from the home.

Young people have done well, with the support of staff, in developing the skills they will need to function independently. For example, most young people are able to cook for themselves, and understand how to plan and budget for food shopping.

Quality of care

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

Staff have established a warm and relaxed atmosphere within the home. However, they have also set clear expectations for how young people should behave. Staff are good at reading young people's feelings and this enables them to provide help and support when needed, while avoiding unnecessary confrontation.

Young people have a good say in the day-to-day operation of the home. They have freedom to choose their bedroom décor and carpet. Menus are flexible and geared to what the young people like to eat. The venue for the summer holiday has been decided in discussion with staff. Young people do not find it easy to engage in group meetings, but individual sessions with their key workers are frequent. This means that young people can express their views in a way which they find more comfortable.

Residential placement plans cover all necessary areas. They are highly individualised and tailored to each young person's particular needs. In addition, there are detailed monthly reports on each young person. All this is fully shared with the young person, giving them ownership of their plan and increasing the likelihood of improved outcomes. The quality of planning extends to the work done in helping young people to make the transition into independence or other placements. A social work manager said, 'Staff are wonderful in moving young people on. All staff, in particular the Registered Manager, have been very proactive in looking at potential placements for my young person to move to. This has meant that plans can be progressed more quickly.' One young person who left the home several years ago told the inspector, 'It was great here. The Registered Manager helped me loads, pointing me in the right direction career-wise. If it wasn't for her I would never have gone to university.'

Staff have good links with mainstream health services, such as dentists and opticians, as well as those which meet more complex needs. A health professional said, 'Staff are very good in sorting out health appointments for young people and they keep me well informed of the outcomes.' Some young people choose not to engage with the local child and adolescent mental health service. However, a professional from this service visits the home fortnightly to meet with staff. This is helpful in enabling staff to understand young people's emotional and behavioural issues and support young people more effectively.

Staff are proactive in supporting young people's education. They have established a culture within the home where education is valued and success is celebrated. A teacher commented, 'I am very impressed with the home and the staff. Communications between the home and school is first class, they always do what

they are asked to in order to support the education of young people. For example, if there are any problems staff will come into school at the drop of a hat.'

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people feel safe and secure living here. They trust the staff to protect them from any threats inside or outside the home. For example, there is no bullying. Moreover, young people are confident that, should it occur, staff will deal with it effectively. This is because staff are clearly intolerant of prejudice and will deal with any behaviour which is intimidating or discriminatory. For example, a recent incident where a young person used homophobic verbal abuse was firmly dealt with by staff who asked the hate crime police officer to visit the home. As a result, the young person apologised and undoubtedly learned from the experience.

Staff are experienced and trained in safeguarding practice, and know when to refer child protection issues either to managers or to local safeguarding agencies. This quality of practice keeps young people safe.

Currently, there is a low level of incidents where young people go missing from the home. Some young people have made significant improvements in this area. This is due partly to staff being proactive in managing contact with young people's friends. For example, staff will check out people and places a young person wants to visit or stay, and agree with the young person and their social worker how to manage this contact safely. Young people cooperate with staff in minimising risk while they are away, for example by agreeing to regular phone contact.

Staff set clear boundaries for behaviour and young people mostly adhere to these. The excellent quality of the relationships between staff and young people helps to maintain good order in the home. Although staff are trained in the use of physical restraint, it is hardly ever used. Sanctions are sometimes used in response to misbehaviour. These are always discussed with the young person so that they are clear about the reasons why and can use the experience positively. However, sometimes a sanction consists of a reduction in the young person's pocket money and this is contrary to the requirements of the regulations.

Fire precautions are good and there are robust systems in place to monitor all aspects of the building's safety. This ensures that the home does not present any hazards. However, the fridge contains part-used packets of food which have not been marked with the date of opening. This presents a potential risk to health.

Leadership and management

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

The home received an interim inspection in February 2013, when it was judged to be making good progress. No statutory requirements or recommendations were made at

that inspection.

The home's statement of purpose and children's guide provides detailed information about the home. This helps users of the service, including young people, their parents and social workers, to be clear about what the home provides. The Registered Manager revises the statement of purpose to reflect any changes, for example when a new member of staff is appointed. However, a copy of the revised statement is not always supplied to Ofsted. This means that the regulator is unable to be aware of such changes.

There is good internal and external monitoring of the home, which includes consultation with parents, young people, and other professionals. This helps the Registered Manager to identify shortfalls in practice and build on areas of strength. All staff have a very good awareness of the progress of young people. This is aided by recording a range of indicators, for example, school attendance, month by month. This contributes to the effectiveness of care planning by enabling staff to identify where a young person may need additional support and concentrating their efforts in these areas.

Because this is a small home, staff sometimes work on their own. However, staff are competent and confident in doing this and always have good backup from managers and colleagues should it be necessary. All staff have appropriate qualifications or are in the process of acquiring them. There is a range of training for staff which ensures that they have the right skills to keep young people safe and promote their welfare. Additionally, regular professional supervision helps staff to reflect on their practice and further enhance the quality of the service they provide to 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* and the evaluation schedule for the inspection of children's homes.