

## Inspection report for children's home

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| <b>Unique reference number</b> | SC039038        |
| <b>Inspection date</b>         | 12/07/2013      |
| <b>Inspector</b>               | Catherine Honey |
| <b>Type of inspection</b>      | Full            |
| <b>Provision subtype</b>       | Children's home |

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| <b>Date of last inspection</b> | 05/03/2013 |
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## Service information

### Brief description of the service

This children's home provides residential care for seven young people with learning difficulties. It is owned and 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 **adequate**.

This home has a positive impact on developing young people's personal, social growth and independent life skills. Young people achieve very good outcomes in their development and well-being. Strengths of the service include the support offered to children and young people to increase their range of communication skills and progress young people have made with independent living. Each young person is valued, and is supported to develop their individual potential; consequently they are achieving well.

Young people are provided with good quality care. The staff team recognises the diverse and vulnerable needs of young people and are diligent in supporting them. Young people demonstrate feeling comfortable and safe in the home. This is underpinned by the positive relationships they have with carers.

Following this inspection four requirements and three recommendations have been made. Shortfalls relate to; ensuring the environment is safe for young people, keeping the regulator informed of changes and significant incidents, ensuring care planning paperwork fully reflects young people's needs, ensuring all staff are understand safeguarding policy and improving communication with parents.

Ofsted made a decision to undertake an early full inspection of this home following information received from surveys, which contained elements of concern about practice in the home.

## 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<br>(2001) | ensure the system for reviewing the quality of care shall provide for consultation with children accommodated in the home, their parents and placing authorities (Regulation 34 (3))                   | 06/09/2013 |
| 11<br>(2001) | ensure that the children's home is conducted so as to make proper provision for the care of children accommodated there. This is in relation to up-to-date care planning documents (Regulation 11 (b)) | 06/09/2013 |
| 23<br>(2001) | ensure all parts of the home to which children have access are so far as reasonably practicable free from hazards to their health (Regulation 23 (a))                                                  | 06/09/2013 |
| 4<br>(2001)  | notify the HMCI of any revision to the Statement of Purpose within 28 days. (Regulation 4 (2))                                                                                                         | 01/08/2013 |

## Recommendations

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

- ensure that the views of the child's family are sought regularly on the child's care, information is shared on arrangements for children's care and communication is maintained (NMS 1.4)
- ensure the children's guide includes a summary of how to secure access to an independent advocate (NMS 13.5)
- ensure there is a whistle-blowing policy which is made known to all staff. (NMS 16.7)

## Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people make very good progress at this home with some young people making exceptional progress. A social worker stated, 'Progress for my young person is massive; improved confidence, speech and presentation.' Another stated, 'My young person is doing fantastically well. This placement has changed his life.'

Young people are making particularly good progress with their health and all identified emotional and psychological needs are fully met. Young people learn about the importance of a healthy diet and exercise and, as a result, they now maintain a

healthy weight and eat healthy and nutritious meals. Young people are taking more responsibility for their own health, for example, by trying to exclude energy drinks from their diet, paying more attention to portion control and making healthy choices. As a result, some young people have lost a significant amount of weight.

Young people make good progress with their independence skills. Examples include: travelling independently on public transport and in learning how to save and budget money. Staff consistently support young people to improve their personal living skills in any way they can, a staff member stated, 'It's the small things that really matter, for example; encouraging a young person to carry their own back pack to school instead of me carrying for them, encouraging them to put their own shoes on where it would have been quicker for me to do it. They are small things but very significant.' Where young people are nearing transition to independence, they feel ready and eager to move on to the next stage in their lives.

Young people have the opportunity to take part in lots of activities. A young person stated, 'There's loads to do: swimming, theme parks, concerts, trips to the park, gym, youth club.' Young people who are trying to stay healthy are supported to enjoy active pass-times such as trampolining. Access to social and community activities help young people to make friendships in the community as well as helping them stay healthy and active. Young people are looking forward to going away with staff on summer holidays. Some young people are going abroad, enabling them to experience new cultures and countries.

All young people attend school or further education and are achieving well. They are making good progress in relation to their starting points and staff liaise closely with education providers to support this progress.

Young people develop emotional resilience and form positive attachments with staff, other young people, and their families. Staff assist young people in maintaining or creating contact with their extended families and use this to help young people gain an understanding of their background and support their emotional development. Young people are learning to manage the conflicting emotions they experience in these contacts.

## **Quality of care**

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

Young people benefit from positive and constructive relationships with carers. Interactions are nurturing and supportive. As a result, they feel safe, secure and confident in the care they receive. A young person stated, 'Staff are so understanding when I am getting frustrated. They help by going for a walk with me to help me calm down. They understand everything about me.' Consequently, young people receive personalised and consistent care resulting in positive outcomes for their development.

Use of methods of communication to support young people remains a strong feature

of this home. Young people benefit from staff using communication methods imaginatively and consistently. One young person has been able to move from making choices, to now being able to consider what is happening 'now' and 'next'. Strong practice around communication is supported by strong relationships and information sharing with schools and other professionals involved in the lives of young people. This helps provide consistent, holistic care in all areas of young people's lives. An independent reviewing officer stated, 'I'm very impressed with their use of a pictorial exchange system. In fact, the young person's communication is so much improved she's able to use verbal communication now much better.'

Young people are able to influence the care they receive and make their views known in various ways. Methods of consultation with children and young people are broad. Young people are encouraged to make personal choices every day, for example, in choosing meals. In addition, some young people take part in a 'children in care' panel. There are also regular young people's meetings. Young people use computers and interactive media to take part in their looked after child reviews. With the support of staff, young people put together presentations which reflect their last few months and help present at their reviews. Presentations include information on how young people have been progressing and individual targets they'd like to set for the next few months. Pictures and observations by staff are included. In this way, young people have a voice, are involved in planning for their own care and are consulted with.

Staff benefit from dedicated hand-over time on every shift; pertinent information on young people is shared, medication is checked and shift planning takes place. Thorough handovers support staff to maintain their current knowledge of young people. The majority of parents feel that communication between them and the home is very good and they are fully enabled to stay involved in the care of their children. However, others feel communication could be improved. For example, a parent was not aware of a specific behaviour management technique used on their child. The Registered Individual had already identified this as an area for improvement. The Registered Manager and staff took immediate action to rectify this during the inspection.

Staff have a good knowledge of the emotional needs of young people. To ensure that young people receive the appropriate therapy and help, staff consult regularly with mental health professionals. This means that young people are receiving all the available support in order to help them achieve positive outcomes. A mental health professional stated, 'Staff are very enthusiastic to learn more, to improve their practice and do their best for the young person.' Arrangements for the administration of medication are effective. The house is well maintained and clean. Young people have their own bedrooms with en suite facilities and are able to personalise their bedrooms to their own tastes.

### **Safeguarding children and young people**

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

Positive behaviour is encouraged and promoted in the home. Staff are aware of and respond to young people's individual behaviours. Individualised and detailed behaviour management plans have been devised to help provide consistent care. The home promotes a positive culture of managing behaviour; sanctions are not used and there is a focus on distraction and de-escalation. Staff are trained in an approved method of physical intervention and know how to use these practices properly. There is minimal use of restraint and it is applied appropriately to ensure young people are safe from danger. Young people have the opportunity to talk with an adult following an incident involving the use of physical intervention. Young people say that they feel safe in the home and do not report bullying as being an issue. One young person said, 'It's perfect.'

Safeguarding processes within the home help protect young people from harm; however, on one occasion there was a short delay in notifying a social worker of an incident. However, there has been no adverse effect on the welfare or safety of children as a result of this shortfall as all other safeguarding processes have been followed appropriately. When allegations or child protection concerns are raised, staff are clear on their responsibility to pass this information on. The home has a whistleblowing policy. However, not all staff are aware of this policy and are not clear on who they should contact if should they be concerned with the welfare of a child in the home. While there is an open culture that enables staff to identify safeguarding issues and raise concerns, this is limited to some degree by a lack of understanding of all staff on the whistleblowing process.

Staff are committed to achieving a balance between managing risk and ensuring that young people are able to have freedom to learn skills and learn to keep themselves and others safe. However, care planning documents on young people's files, such as risk assessments, do not always reflect young people's current behaviour or measures put in place to balance risk. For example, where a young person had exhibited new and concerning behaviour, an updated risk assessment did not reflect this change.

There have not been any reported incidents of young people going missing. High staffing levels and close engagement appropriate to the individual needs of young people ensures that they do not go missing from the home or on trips. Full information on recruitment processes are held at head office and the home holds a record of recruitment; demonstrating recruitment procedures have been safe.

Health and safety arrangements in the home are reviewed and monitored regularly. For example, temperatures are regularly tested to ensure water is at an appropriate temperature. However, during the inspection, a household insecticide was identified being used to help control ants. The use of this substance had not been assessed for risk and no protocol was available to demonstrate how it is used safely. This substance could be harmful to young people's health.

## **Leadership and management**

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

High staffing ratios are in place in the home and staff successfully deliver a high standard of care to meet diverse individual care needs and help young people to achieve positive outcomes. If required, staff from an agency cover absence. Regular members of agency staff are used; this ensures continuity and consistency for young people. Staff receive regular supervision and access to regular training. New staff benefit from a comprehensive induction and are enthusiastic about their new roles. Staff confirm they have regular access to training and are able to identify additional training opportunities for their own personal development or to help support the identified needs of a child. This means children and young people are supported by a well-trained workforce who are able to meet their individual needs.

Files are well structured, comprehensive and give a clear picture of the young person's history and how to work with each individual. Records in the home are of good quality, clear and the majority are typed to ensure legibility. Records provide a coherent account of the young people's journey through the home. The home is required to notify Ofsted of significant events. There have been at least three occasions where significant events have not been notified to Ofsted in line with regulation. Two other recent events were retrospectively notified on promoting from the inspector. Although appropriate safeguarding measures had been taken to protect children, the regulatory body has not been able to sufficiently monitor procedures and safeguarding practice within the home.

At the home's previous inspection, a recommendation was made in relation to the guide children receive when they first come to live at the home. The guide has been revised and now holds information on independent reviewing officers and contact details for the Children's Rights Director. However, it still does not show how to secure access to an independent advocate. The home meets the aims and objectives as described in its Statement of Purpose. This means parents/carers and social workers are clear on the purpose of the home. However, a recent amendment to the Statement of Purpose was not submitted to Ofsted. This makes it difficult for the regulator to have a full overview of the home.

The service has established a system for monitoring the activities within the home. There are monthly monitoring visits and these reports are submitted to Ofsted. Regular reviews of the quality of the care the home provides are completed by the Registered Manager and submitted to Ofsted. However, although children and young people are consulted with regularly, currently these reports do not reflect on how consultation with children, parents and social workers help improve quality of care in the home.



## 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.