

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	14/06/2012
Inspector	Louisa Bayley
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Date of last inspection	25/01/2012
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This children's home is owned by a registered charity. The home provides long-term accommodation for four young people with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

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 experienced a time of change, with the resignation of the Registered Manager. The current deputy manager will take up the substantive post of manager on 1 July 2012. She is addressing a number of deficiencies that have emerged in processes and systems within the home. She is also striving for improvement in the culture of the home, raising staff aspirations for young people. Feedback from a wealth of professionals, parents and carers reflects conflicting views of the care provided by the home. Some views are positive, with praise for the care provided. Young people say they are happy living in the home. There is recognition that the deputy manager has made improvements. Some professionals working with the home reflect she is working hard to tighten boundaries for young people and develop consistency within the staff team. Other professionals raise concern regarding the lack of education and appropriate boundaries.

On balance, it is clear that there have been deficiencies in aspects such as consistency, behaviour management and education. However, under the new leadership, the staff team are working hard to make improvements that result in positive outcomes for young people. The deputy manager has ensured that education placements have been arranged for young people. Staff are working proactively with social workers and other professionals to identify ways to reduce risk-taking behaviour. As a result, young people benefit from care planning which is tailored to meet their individual needs.

Shortfalls identified during the inspection are: no recording or written response to a complaint received from a neighbour; absence of signatures and dates on some case records for young people; out of date and incorrect information in the Statement of

Purpose; gaps in training and supervision for some staff. There is however, a clear improvement in frequency of supervision since the new leadership has been in place.

Areas identified for improvement are: ensuring the home is well maintained and decorated; reviewing sanctions to identify trends and issues; ensuring a meeting is arranged for young people with the responsible authority following incidents of missing from home; ensuring young people, who are eligible, have a pathway plan for their transition to adult life.

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
24 (2001)	ensure that a written record is made of any complaint, the action taken in response, and the outcome of the investigation (Regulation 24 (5))	13/07/2012
28 (2001)	ensure that records in respect of each child accommodated in the home are signed and dated by the author of each entry (Regulation 28 (1)(c))	13/07/2012
5 (2001)	keep under review and, where appropriate, revise the statement of purpose and the children's guide and notify HMCI of any such revision with 28 days (Regulation 5 (a)(b))	13/07/2012
27 (2001)	ensure that all persons employed by the home receive appropriate training, supervision and appraisal, with specific regard to first aid and restraint training and regular supervision. (Regulation 27 (4)(a))	13/07/2012

Recommendations

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

- provide a comfortable and homely environment which is well maintained and decorated (NMS 10.3)
- review incidents of challenging behaviour, examine trends or issues emerging from this, to enable staff to reflect and learn to inform future practice (NMS 3.21)
- ensure that where a child goes missing and there is concern for their welfare, or at the request of a child, staff arrange a meeting between the child and the responsible authority to consider the reasons for the child going missing (NMS 5.9)

- contribute to the development of each child's care plan, including the pathway plan for "eligible" care leavers and work collaboratively with the young person's social worker or personal adviser in implementing the plan. (NMS 12.2)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people benefit from regular key work sessions, which address a wide range of topics, including self-view, emotional resilience, keeping safe and sexual health. A professional working with the home described key work with one young person as: 'very impressive and very positive.'

Young people are supported to engage with health services, including preventative services such as smoking cessation. Health needs such as medical, optical and dental are addressed. Young people manage their own medication, where appropriate to their age and development. This helps to prepare them to move towards independence. Involvement with the child and adolescent mental health service and educational psychology service ensures that young people's needs are assessed and recommendations made as to how they can be met. Professional colleagues from other agencies attend some staff meetings to give advice, support and strategies to staff. This means that staff are better equipped to respond to individual's needs.

Professionals working with the home report that young people have made progress with developing their relationships. Contact with significant adults and friends is promoted and supported. A family member said, of the home: 'they invite me there all the time and they encourage me to visit.' As a result, young people experience improved frequency and quality of contact.

Young people develop their independence skills, learning to budget, shop, cook and use public transport. They are prepared for moving on and are encouraged to take responsibility for themselves. However, some young people do not have a pathway plan.

Young people have not fully engaged with education. There have been issues with placements and non-attendance. The manager has challenged the local authority regarding educational placements, advocating on behalf of young people. Work has taken place between the home, social workers and young people, to determine ways to help them engage and progress educationally. This has resulted in accessing a college placement, full time statutory education placement and progress toward an apprenticeship for young people.

Quality of care

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

Young people in the home have generally good relationships with each other and

with the staff. They say they feel safe and enjoy living in the home. Views regarding the consistency of staff and boundaries are mixed. A professional working with the home commented: 'young people who are there love it, but I am not sure if this is because they can do what they like.' There is, however, a clear pattern of improvement in setting boundaries for young people. This is confirmed by professionals who have had more recent involvement with the home.

Young people are asked for their opinions. Although residents' meetings are infrequent, young people are able to contribute their views and are listened to. An example of this is the implementation of a white board, so they can write what they would like ordered in the weekly shopping delivery. They are able to choose colour schemes for their bedrooms and have input with the menus and activities.

Young people are cared for in line with their placement plans. Regular reviews take place and the minutes of reviews and meetings are held on individual case files. Young people are able to contribute their opinions regarding their care plan as part of the review process. They are encouraged to contribute to meetings with social workers and other professionals, to express their views and wishes.

Arrangements for dealing with medication are safe, the stock records are correct and all medication administration is appropriately recorded.

Young people know how to make a complaint. There is a complaints procedure but young people do not receive an individual response to complaints. The book used to record complaints is placed in a communal space. This means that any issue raised is available for public viewing. There has been one complaint from a young person since the last inspection. This was followed up and action taken to resolve the matter.

Staff in the home work positively with parents and carers. Feedback from parents and carers includes: 'I think they are doing a fantastic job' and 'the care provided is of a high standard and staff genuinely put the child first wherever possible.' There is good communication between the home and carers. Parents and carers are invited in to the home and made to feel very welcome, cooking and enjoying meals in the with the young people. Young people engage in activities such as roller skating, cinema, youth activity centre and arts and crafts.

Young people's cultural and individual needs are met. Young people who wish to attend church or other groups are facilitated to do so. Staff treat young people as individuals. A professional reflected on the care of a young person: 'the home did not blindly apply their rules but made allowances for him as an individual.'

There is a programme of on-going home improvements; however, there are parts of the home that are not well decorated or maintained.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people say they feel safe. There is a procedure for reporting bullying and staff follow up incidents, checking back with young people after the event to ensure they are not having further issues. Each young person has a key worker; they are also able to talk to their social workers and the independent visitor. Telephone numbers are displayed in the phone room so that other professionals can be contacted if young people wish to do so.

Individual risk assessments are in place, along with twenty four hour management plans. Triggers of behaviour are identified and risk assessments are regularly updated. Staff promote preventative approaches to reduce harmful behaviours such as smoking. The manager is striving to change the culture of the home, providing security by setting behavioural boundaries. A professional working with the home said: 'the new manager is very consistent with the boundaries. She ensures there is some sort of consequence. There is a definite improvement since the change of management. She is working with the staff team to promote consistency.'

Where incidents such as missing from care occur, relevant agencies are informed. Action is taken to look at how future incidents can be reduced or avoided. Strategy meetings take place with the police and social workers and plans are initiated. A social worker commented: 'the home is doing everything they possibly can to keep the young person safe.' Incidents of missing from care have decreased over time. Young people are not always offered a visit from the responsible authority following an incident of missing from care.

Restraint is seldom used and when it is, it is in response to young people endangering themselves or others. Recording of restraint is in line with required legislation. The manager monitors restraint and discusses the incident with the staff involved and the young person. Sanctions are recorded but they do not all have comments from young people nor do they detail whether the sanction was effective. In some cases, the sanction is not effective as the same behaviour continues to happen.

Staff are recruited through the organisational procedure, with all appropriate vetting and checks in place prior to appointment being made.

Leadership and management

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

The new manager has been recruited and is due to commence in post at the beginning of July 2012. She has been acting up from her substantive post of deputy manager since 2 April 2012. She has a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the home. There is a development plan in place and areas for improvement have been identified. Systems, processes, professional language and messages to young people are all under review. The aim is to bring about a culture of high aspiration for young people, through staff expectations and improved consistency.

There has been one complaint from a young person since the last inspection. This was followed up by staff and resolved. A complaint from a neighbour was made and action taken to address it. However, there is no record of the complaint or detail of the outcome.

The requirement raised at the previous inspection to notify Ofsted of significant events has been acted upon.

The Statement of Purpose is not fully up to date; it contains some incorrect references to another children's home and does not contain the correct address for Ofsted.

The independent visitor monitors and reports on the home on a monthly basis. Young people are consulted during the monitoring visits. Reports are submitted to Ofsted within appropriate timescales. There is a system in place to monitor and improve the quality of care. Young people's views are recorded along with the outcome of their request. There is detail of consultation with placing authorities and parents. Responses are recorded along with the subsequent improvements in the care provided.

Staff supervision takes place on a monthly basis. There have been occasions, however, when supervisions have been missed. This has improved greatly during the last two months and supervisions are now held in line with organisational policy. A member of staff said the sessions are productive and supportive.

There is a wide range of training available for the staff. This enhances staff knowledge and understanding and increases the quality of work with young people. However, a small number of staff have not had up-to-date training in first aid and restraint.

Health and safety requirements are met. Fire drills, fire equipment testing and health and safety checks take place regularly and are recorded. As a result, young people live in a safe environment.

Records about young people are clear, but some are not dated or signed, making it difficult to see when they need to be reviewed.

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.