

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC040926
Inspection date	23/05/2011
Inspector	Maria McGranaghan
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	01/12/2010
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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

This home provides care and accommodation for up to six young people of either gender between the ages of 11 and 17 years. It is a home run by a local authority.

Overall effectiveness

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

The home provides satisfactory care. Young people have security, stability and are cared for by staff who work hard to keep them safe. The quality of care promotes improving outcomes for young people. This includes young people having opportunities to develop their personal and social skills inclusive of being able to access the wider community and undertake meaningful activities. Young people have a positive view about their care, especially their secure relationship with staff. Young people feel safe around staff although will make risky decisions that can place them at risk of harm. Despite the strengths there are weaknesses. Young people all have individual plans although they are not comprehensive. Similarly, the management of behaviour including bullying is compromised by a lack of robust monitoring systems. There are breaches in regulation, mainly relating to record keeping. These shortfalls do not have a direct impact on the daily care the young people receive, although do have an impact on the home's ability to sustain their delivery of care. Likewise there are a number of national minimum standards also not fully met. These again mainly relate to the quality of records rather than direct care.

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
17 (2001)	ensure that subject to paragraph (3) the following shall not be used as a disciplinary measure on children accommodated in the home (g) the imposition of a financial penalty other than the requirement for the payment of a reasonable sum by way of reparation (regulation 17 (3) (2)(g))	23/06/2011
28 (2001)	ensure in respect of each child who is accommodated in a children's home a record in permanent form which (b) is kept up to date and (c) is signed and dated by the author of each	23/06/2011

	written entry. (regulation 28 (1) (b) (c))	
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Recommendations

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

- ensure sanctions and rewards for behaviour are clear, reasonable and fair and are understood by all staff and children (NMS 3.8)
- ensure that all young people and staff are given an opportunity to discuss incidents of restraint they have been involved in, witnessed or been affected by, with a relevant adult (NMS 3.17)
- improve the procedures for monitoring and controlling the activities of the home including; with reference to any serious incidents, allegations, complaints about the provision and the quality of the provision. Improve how young people in the home are regularly involved in contributing to monitoring the operation of the home, and how their views and concerns are taken into account (NMS 21.1)
- ensure the manager regularly monitors, in line with regulations all records kept by the home to ensure compliance with the homes policies, to identify any concerns about specific incidents and to identify patterns and trends. Immediate action is taken to address any issues raised by this monitoring. (NMS 21.2)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people are making good progress in developing skills and attitudes that help to keep them safe and prepared for adult life. They have developed in confidence and emotional resilience and are supported to make significant life changes. Equally, young people have a strong sense of self-worth and positive self direction in relation to their education, personal aspirations and goals toward their future.

Young people have health care plans and enjoy good physical health and access to services to ensure this remains the case. Good links are made with specialist health services to meet the emotional and mental health of young people. However, risk assessments for specific conditions or reasons why appointments are missed are not routinely updated for all young people and serve to potentially compromise their health and wellbeing.

Young people living at the home have a history of poor educational attendance. However, all young people now receive full time education and have very good attendance records. School reports highlight good progress for all young people with some achieving college and work base placements. Young people are supported by staff to ensure they have the correct equipment for school and are assisted to complete homework. One young person said, 'I used to hate school or anything like that, but I am doing ok now, I am doing child care and I really enjoy it'. The staff promote education offering time and commitment enabling young people to make consistent progress and gain the ability to recognise their own achievements.

Young people are encouraged to develop external social networks and peer friendships within the community. As a result, young people have grown in confidence and feel part of the community they live in. One young person said 'it feels like home, I can see my friends, go to their houses and sometimes stay over. They can come here for tea and are always made welcome'.

Young people benefit from planned and supported contact with parents and relatives. Detailed information in placement plans helps to ensure that contact only takes place with whom it has been agreed. Some young people have developed relationships outside of the home. Where concerns have been identified staff have liaised with the appropriate agencies in order to manage potential risk and put actions into place. However, lack of detail within the homes audit trails results in information about how concerns are reviewed being unclear. As a result, the work undertaken with some young people about risk taking behaviour is not clearly evidenced. Despite these shortfalls, young people have a relationship with staff which is built on mutual respect and trust. Young people are confident enough to approach staff with worries and accept help from them or other services.

The staff support young people to develop independent skills in accordance with their age and ability. Young people are encouraged to assist in preparing and cooking the evening meal, choosing and purchasing their own clothes and to develop an awareness of good personal hygiene and routines. All young people hold a bank account and are encouraged to save on a regular basis, developing an understanding of how to manage their own finances. Young people have an up-to-date pathway plan and are supported by external agencies in planning for their future

independence. As a result young people feel supported and informed about their future plans and this helps them look forward to their future.

Quality of care

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

Young people are making consistent progress in a stable and supportive environment. One young person said, 'I love the staff here they are really great' another young person said, 'some days I like it here other days I don't'. Staff displayed natural warmth and this was evident when they made a fuss of young people before waving them off to school. Young people appeared genuinely happy in their company.

Socially accepted behaviour is promoted within the home. Incentive schemes are developed to assist young people to take part in education and maintain their bedrooms. On the whole, young people demonstrate satisfactory behaviour in the home and community. However, where behaviour deteriorates, the strategy for behaviour management is limited. Sanctions are inconsistent and do not always suitably represent individual behaviour. As a result opportunities for young people to learn how to manage their own behaviour are reduced.

Young people are encouraged to partake in the consultation process within the home and this assists them to explore the care they are receiving and give written feedback. One young person said, 'The staff really look after me here, they are there for me when I need them'. Young people's meetings take place on a regular basis and provides a forum for group discussion. Young people are supported to devise healthy and nutritious meal plans as well as planning the week's activities. They are encouraged to comment on the running of the home and any changes they feel would improve the home such as additional snacks and treats. The manager commented, we don't buy high level sweet snacks as we encourage the young people to make their own biscuits, if they want to buy sweet or sugary options they must use their pocket money'. While it is commendable that the manager is promoting a healthy environment for all young people, consideration of young people's particular preferences with regard to snacks within the home is not currently always fully considered and respected as part of the consultation process.

Young people confirm they know how to complain and how to access information, including information about being bullied. Information is available in the young people's guide and notice board and includes contact numbers for external agencies who can be contacted independently of the home. One young person said 'I've had all the information and I know what to do, staff listen to me, I feel they would help me if I needed them'. Young people feel safe and say they had not experienced any bullying in the home for a long time. However, records indicate bullying related issues that are not progressed under the bullying policy. There are inconsistencies in what constitutes bullying within the home and as a result information lacked detail. Staff say, 'sometimes young people have a spat with someone and it is not really bullying, just letting off steam'. Consequently, records highlight issues that have arisen but do not clearly demonstrate the decision making process including where matters are resolved in other ways. Despite this shortfall young people confirm they feel happy and safe in the home

Young people have individual care plans that identify their specific need and how the home aims to meet them. Involvement with external services supports the care plan assisting to maximise the potential for each young person. The use of a key worker

system ensures that need is reviewed and individual work is planned to address specific areas of the care plan. However, records of the work taking place in support of individual care plan's are vague and lack detail, failing to capture some of the good work undertaken in the home.

The arrangements for managing medication are robustly applied. This includes concise audit trails to validate young people are receiving their medication in accordance with the doctor's instructions.

Staff hold good aspirations for the young people and want them to achieve to their full potential. One young person said, 'My key worker pushes me to do things I wouldn't otherwise do'. A staff member said 'we encourage them all the time to do the best they can and we make sure to praise all their efforts'. Evidence of praise is highlighted in the positive consequence book and as a result young people are afforded a special treat for their efforts.

Young people's heritage and cultural background is celebrated in the home. The staff use a range of resources to enable young people to learn about different cultures including quizzes and a variety of age appropriate books. Young people celebrate different religious and cultural festivals on a regular basis. They are assisted to cook and bake international cuisine and explore the differences in cultures. One young person said, 'I love the food here, we get to try all sorts and we make all of it ourselves, I enjoy eating at the table and talking with the staff and other young people'. This practice enables young people to develop an awareness and appreciation of our multi-cultural society whilst offering them the skills to cook a range of food.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

There are measures in place to help young people live in a healthy environment in which their physical safety is appropriately secured. Young people say they feel safe and they are able to talk to staff about any worries or concerns they may have. Environmental risk assessments are in place and regular fire safety tests are undertaken.

The staff are aware of young people's particular vulnerabilities and attempt to address these needs by accessing additional resources to maximise the support for young people. For example staff have forged links with health professionals to gain advice and guidance on managing young people's sexual health.

There is a minimum use of restraint as a form of control. Where a restraint has been necessary, information is recorded and suitably reviewed by the young person. However, records indicate a limited opportunity for young people to record their views and feelings about a restraint. As a result, young people's views are not clearly captured thus limiting the information needed to appropriately evaluate the effectiveness of the action taken.

Staff demonstrated awareness of protecting young people from visitors. The protocol used to vet visitors to the home ensures that the young people's safety is not compromised. The recruitments and selection of staff at the home is good. The manager ensures that all required information is held on file and all suitable checks have been completed prior to staff working at the home.

Staff receive regular child protection training in order that they are able to respond to allegations or suspicions of abuse. Young people are rarely missing. Nonetheless, when this has occurred they are appropriately reported and relevant action taken to secure their return. However, the home does not hold a central record for recording and reporting suspicions or allegation of abuse. Recent concerns highlight that staff take appropriate action such as reporting and liaising with external services. However, the audit trail lacks detail and as a result information about how concerns are being managed is not consistently available to staff.

The young people have a number of organisations outside of the home to contact to discuss concerns or worries. Young people report that they feel safe in the home and in the community. Young people know to call staff if they feel concerned and are given a mobile phone in order that they are able to maintain contact with staff. This reassurance provides young people with confidence that support is not far away.

Leadership and management

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

Young people live in a home where staff demonstrate a commitment to all the young people. This is evidenced through their progress in areas of education, social mobility, and young people's growing commitment to personal achievement. The manager and staff have good relationships with young people and have established innovative ways of engaging with them, such as quiz's, arts and crafts, young people's meetings and cultural festivals. As a result young people are afforded a range of activities to enhance their communication and performance.

The practice in the home is adequately reflected within a clear Statement of Purpose and Function. Young people, parents and providers are provided with clear information about the home prior to admission. As a result young people can identify with the home and feel part of the planning for their care.

Care plans and risk assessments are drawn up and records held. Clear information about the young people's life journey helps to capture their experiences to date and the support needed to make further development. Comparatively, information relating to individual diversity is thoroughly explored and appropriate action is taken to support and respect young people's differences.

The physical environment is safe and secure and environmental risk assessments are in place to address matters of health and safety. The staff and young people have undertaken fire safety training. Risk assessments are in place to reduce the likelihood of fire and the action to be taken in the event of a fire including floor plans and escape plans. Young people benefit from a well maintained, furnished and decorated home that is warm, clean and welcoming promoting a sense of ownership and belonging.

Staff receive regular key training in order to maintain good quality care practices within the home. They are supported by the manager and confirm that if they require additional support or guidance the manager always makes themselves available. The home is adequately staffed with both male and female workers of mixed age and ability. This ensures young people experienced a positive gender balance coupled with varying levels of maturity.

Young people's files are confidentially handled and information securely stored. However, some records lack clarity and detail. Behaviour management methods are and the internal monitoring systems does not consistently identify shortfalls in practice. Comparatively, the home has developed good relationships with external agencies that support young people in their care. However, information is not recorded consistently therefore reducing the effectiveness of overall monitoring.

The external monitoring systems are consistent in both attendance and reporting. Young people occasionally engage with the external visitor and their issues are clearly reported on. Practice issues identified within the external monitoring are acted on.

The home has taken action to address previous requirements arising from the previous inspection. For example, greater emphasis has been placed on ensuring

staff information is securely stored and prompt action taken where damage has occurred. Furthermore, specific information about a young person's needs is now on file and outstanding checks on the electrical system have been completed.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.