

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC045096
Inspection date	01/06/2011
Inspector	Janice Hawtin
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	22/09/2010
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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

The home is owned by a private limited company. It is registered to care for three young people aged 11 to 17 years with an emotional or behavioural disorders. The home currently accommodates three young people whose care is focused on preparation for independence; they were present during and contributed to this full inspection

Overall effectiveness

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

The home offers a good standard of care with a focus on preparing young people for adulthood and independence whilst in a support environment. Young people are expected to take increasing responsibility for themselves dependant on ability and are allowed to take age appropriate risks and develop practical skills such as shopping, budgeting and personal health care.

Practice is supported by comprehensive policy documents, a well trained staff team and a dedicated manager who staff described as 'available' and 'approachable'. There is an emphasis on educational achievement and all young people attend the organisations schools, from what can be a disadvantaged starting point educational progress is notable.

The Statement of Purpose is in the process of being reviewed, currently it is a generic document across several homes and does not accurately reflect the practice, aims and objectives of this home or contain the information required about the staff team.

Whilst there is a homely feel about this provision and it is personalised throughout by the young people, some areas are not well maintained.

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
4	the registered person should ensure that the Statement of	01/07/2011

(2001)	Purpose provides detail of the matters listed in Schedule 1 (Regulation 4.1)	
17B (2001)	the registered person must ensure that there is a written record of any restraints which includes detail of the behaviour leading up to the restraint, the measure used and it's effectiveness (Regulation 17B(3)(b)(c) &(f))	01/07/2011

Recommendations

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

- provide a written development plan which details any planned changes in the operation or resources of the service (NMS 15.2)
- ensure that the home is well maintained and decorated paying particular attention to the kitchen windows, bedroom fittings and decoration (NMS 10.3)
- ensure that where a child goes missing the registered manager follows the Runaway and Missing from Home and Care (RMFHC) protocol and also complies with any other processes required by the placing authority as specified in the child's care plan, essentially following an individualised risk assessment and action plan (NMS 5.7)
- make sure that young people know how to keep themselves safe and do not allow strangers on to the premises without making sure they have the right to enter, especially when the care staff are not present(NMS 4.4).

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people are confident in speaking to adults and voicing their opinion, they have knowledge of their background and understand the reasons for living in a children's home. They have clear expectations and aspirations for the future; some young people are going on to study vocational courses at college and others hope to stay on at school and do further GCSE's.

The educational achievement of young people is successful considering that historically education has been compromised by poor school attendance and disruption. Work experience is encouraged and the staff actively seek opportunities and will pay young people to attend, giving them a taste of working life. Some young people also have part time jobs.

Activities in the community are encouraged and young people have been involved in a drop-in centre for youth, swimming and dancing lessons, others report that they like walking and spending time with friends. One young person plays basket ball at a national level.

The focus of this home is in preparing young people for independence and adult life; all are approaching the end of compulsory school education and most are confident about their skills and abilities. Practical life skills are encouraged and young people are expected to budget, shop, cook and clean for themselves. The use of public transport is promoted where this is practical, although on occasion this may have reduced school attendance for some young people.

Young people understand the importance of healthy lifestyles, regular health checks are up-to-date, emotional health and well-being is promoted and young people have access to counselling from Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). A healthy balanced diet is also encouraged and young people are able to produce wholesome home cooked food.

Staff enable appropriate contact with family and friends and can facilitate direct contact and encourage phone contact. Mobile phone credit is provided on a weekly basis and young people take responsibility for suitable use. Staff social workers and family can be contacted in private using the home's phone.

Quality of care

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

Young people have positive relationships with staff and most feel that they are well cared for and provided with the support they need in line with their placement plan. Planning documents and risk assessments are for the most part comprehensive, regularly reviewed and summarised for quick reference into a 'working with' document. Triggers which may provoke unacceptable behaviour are identified in attempts to reduce incidents.

Young people attend planning meetings and reviews, they are consulted about all aspects of their care and make their own choices about menus, cooking, clothing and toiletries etc with help and encouragement to make healthy choices. A daily log book is completed by both young people and staff, progress and issues can be highlighted and dealt with daily and the log also provides a record of care for young people.

Young people know how to make a complaint and several phone numbers are available to them in the young person's handbook including numbers for Ofsted and Childline, although most would speak to a parent or social worker. Complaints are few; none have been recorded since the last inspection.

Education is considered a priority and staff have high expectations for the young people they support, care staff are available in the schools to support young people and teachers.

Allowances given to young people are comparable to those they will receive on leaving care, from this they purchase their own clothing and toiletries. Young people commented on the limited money available for clothing but that this had encouraged them to look for a part time job. Young people pay for leisure activities out of their allowances, although the home financially supports those involving exercise such as gym membership and swimming lessons. Young people like spending time with friends and walking.

The home is situated in a residential estate on the outskirts of a large town; it offers spacious modern accommodation which is personalised through out by the young people. The home has its own car and public transport is available near-by, young people are encouraged to use this as part of independence programmes. Some areas of the home need attention, in one kitchen the double glazed window units are broken down making them difficult to see through and there are other areas needing up-dating, minor repair or decoration.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people report that they feel safe in the home and have a least 'one member of staff who they can talk to about anything'. The staff team use positive reinforcement, modelling and discussion to develop positive behaviour strategies, given the age of young people. Material rewards and sanctions are few and staff expectations of mature behaviour are high and age appropriate. Where sanctions are used these are fair and where possible linked to the behaviour.

Reflection on behaviour is regular and always where it has resulted in physical restraint; this allows for young people to consider the effects of their behaviour and identify triggers which may reduce further issues. Use of restraint has reduced in recent months indicating a gradual improvement in behaviour and two young people report that they have not been restrained. The behaviour leading up to restraint is not always recorded in enough detail and lacks description of the holds used and their effectiveness; this limits the information available in analysing these incidents and therefore the potential to reduce their frequency or in providing evidence of the legality of the restraint.

Particular vulnerabilities have been given consideration and all young people have received education in safe use of the internet to which they have access and have also watched a police video around keeping safe when travelling in a car and what constitutes safe driving.

The home has a policy around dealing with young people who go missing and a flow chart is available to staff for quick reference. While young people do not go missing very often they do not have individual risk assessments or plans in place. Agreed arrangements with the local police to support effective action and potential minimise risks for missing young people are not in place.

Comprehensive child protection procedures are available along side quick reference flow charts; training for staff is robust and effective leaving staff able to readily describe how to deal with any child protection issues, should they arise.

The environment is physically safe with regular checks on fire, electrical and gas appliances. Attention is paid to security of the building however young people invited an inspector into the house without checking their right of entry or asking for identification, potentially compromising their safety.

Staff are carefully selected and vetted to help prevent unsuitable people from having the opportunity to harm young people.

Leadership and management

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

The home is managed by a suitable qualified and experienced manager who is clear about potential development needs and has the support of a small staff team one of whom described her as 'approachable and available'. Support for the team manager and other staff is readily available from the head of care and or a duty manager

Records are for the most part up-to-date and stored securely in a locked office. An individualised daily log book completed by both young people and staff contribute to the understanding of a child's life.

Significant events are notified to Ofsted, parents and placing authorities in a timely manner. On occasion reports received do not contain clear information.

Staff receive regular supervision which includes discussion around personal development and career development. A supervision schedule and agenda for supervision is kept on the premises. Supervision discussions are recorded on compact discs and stored at the company's head office. All staff are subject to the company's induction training followed by the Children's Workforce Development Council's programme which is mapped to National Vocational Qualifications. Training for staff is comprehensive and a training matrix for all staff is available and updated every month. Across the organisation nearly 90% of staff have a professional child care qualification and the other staff are working towards these.

The team manager has kept up-to-date with recent changes in legislation and is in the process of identifying potential improvements; while she has clear ideas about development needs plans are not recorded, formalised or shared with the staff team. This is likely to limit success and the ability to evidence a commitment to continual improvement.

Regulation 33 and 34 audits are undertaken and the quality of these has improved in recent months, now including detail of discussion with young people. Regulation 34 reports do not currently include analysis of trends and patterns and how findings could be used to improve the quality of care.

The Statement of Purpose is accessible but does not contain accurate detail of the service provided at this address or information as required in Children's Homes Regulations 2001. Purchasers of this service and parents have not got access to clear and easy to understand written information about this home.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.