

## Inspection report for children's home

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| <b>Unique reference number</b> | SC045096        |
| <b>Inspection date</b>         | 20/11/2012      |
| <b>Inspector</b>               | Janice Hawtin   |
| <b>Type of inspection</b>      | Full            |
| <b>Provision subtype</b>       | Children's home |

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| <b>Date of last inspection</b> | 25/01/2012 |
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## 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 with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. Care packages usually include the provision of education at the company school.

### 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**.

Steady progress is measurable in this home where carefully, considered matching of children has a positive impact on their social and emotional development. Children interact positively with one another, they are safe in this environment and bullying is not an issue. Care is supported by detailed and robust care planning which is personalised to meet individual needs and reviewed on a regular basis. Children make progress across all aspects of development. Regular attendance at school, access to support services and involvement in activities supports the success of placements and improved outcomes for children.

An enthusiastic and experienced manager is in place, she has the support of a small staff team, carefully chosen for their skills and experience in meeting the needs of the current residents. Staff understand the strengths and weaknesses of the children they care for and take action to ensure each is developing to their full potential. The environment is homely, most areas have been recently decorated and there are lots of personalised touches which provide a sense of belonging and adds to children feeling valued.

Clear boundaries and expectations support behaviour management and encourage children to take responsibility for their behaviour depending on their age and understanding. Praise, modelling, sanctions and rewards are used to encourage positive behaviour. Formalised schemes which provide clear understandable rewards for children have not been updated recently. Consequently some opportunities to change negative behaviour are missing.

Independent monitoring of the service on behalf of the Responsible Individual is detailed and robust in assuring the quality of care provided. The manager makes use of these reports to address any issues. Regulation 34 reports completed by the manager do not provide detail of how this monitoring contributes to improving the quality of care for children. The system for consultation with children, their parents and placing authorities is not included in this monitoring, missing an opportunity to take into account their views and wishes.

## 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) | demonstrate in reports provided under Regulation 34 how the system established for monitoring improves the quality of care provided and how it provides for consultation with children, their parents and placing authorities. (Regulation 34 (1)(b)&(3)) | 31/03/2013 |

### Recommendations

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

- ensure that rewards for behaviour are clear and understood by children.(NMS 3.8)

### Outcomes for children and young people

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

Staff work in partnership with parents where possible and support regular contact where appropriate. This encourages children in understanding their background and history, family photos are displayed in the home and appropriate memorabilia of their time in care is kept. Consequently children have knowledge of their background and an on-going history of their time in care to support a positive self-view. A parent reported that her child had, 'Grown in confidence and has broadened his horizons, since admission to the home, now taking an interest in lots of things he wouldn't have bothered with, like learning to play a guitar.'

The organisation is primarily an education provider and most placements are made

on the basis of the school provision. Care staff work in partnership with education staff, providing transport to school and attending class rooms with children to support positive behaviour. Consequently children have an excellent attendance record and are making measurable progress in attainment.

Healthy life styles are considered and children enjoy a well-balanced and healthy diet. Children are encouraged to take age and ability appropriate responsibility for their own health. Some children have made considerable progress in improving their diet which has a significant impact on their physical wellbeing. Improvements in personal hygiene and self-care skills are also notable. Risk taking behaviour such as smoking, drug use or involvement in criminal activity is not a feature of this home.

Physical activity is encouraged through the range of activities provided and some children take part in community team sports such as football and rugby. The range of activities supports the individual development needs of children and includes membership of uniformed organisations, private lessons and use of libraries and parks. Consequently children acquire interpersonal and practical skills which support their education and development. They are also developing networks and knowledge of support services and facilities which will be available to them once they leave care. Children make good use of and enjoy playing with toys, games and books provided in the home.

Children share their feelings, through individual support sessions and regular residents meetings. They contribute to menus and activity planning. Children comment following the use of any disciplinary measures and this contributes to behaviour management and helping children to understand the consequences of their behaviour and effect on others. Where children find communication difficult, they can use alternative methods such as stickers to express a view.

Attention to the acquisition of practical independence skills is dependent on age and ability. All children help with some household tasks, they are encouraged to develop their full potential and expectations will increase as they get older and become more able.

## **Quality of care**

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

Children benefit from encouraging relationships with staff and the care provided is having a positive impact on their progress and development. Parents and social workers confirm this and comments include, 'They are doing an excellent job, this is a good placement, social skills have progressed really well and now allow the child to be able to share the home with another child, this would not have been possible 6 months ago, and education has improved.' Children get on with one another and careful matching has enabled them to learn from one another and develop some understanding of difference and diversity. Staff understand the need and particular vulnerabilities of the children they care for. They are astute in identifying changes in behaviour or recognising anxiety and will take action to deal with or alleviate

concerns.

The homes care planning supports the individual care and development needs of children. Plans are comprehensive using the Every Child matters agenda as a guide; they are reviewed on a regular basis to ensure intervention strategies are effective and that children are developing to their full potential. Staff work in partnership with other agencies in providing for children. Specialist services are sought where needed and currently include speech therapy and art therapy. The manager has recently taken action to address shortfalls in accessing the child and adolescent mental health services.

Education is provided within the wider organisation and as such attendance at school is a high priority and the support from care staff ensures attendance, participation and attainment. A productive working relationship between care and education staff allows them to share information and effective practice to maximise development opportunities and positive outcomes for children. This practice has recently impacted on a child's participation in education and reduced incidents of them needing 'time out' from lessons.

Children are provided with opportunities to engage in a wide range of activities to support the development of interests, alongside practical and interpersonal skills. Staff support participation in sporting, community and individual activities for children to maximise their experiences and learning. They are also encouraged to develop empathy and understanding of equality, recently taking part in providing gift boxes for less privileged children in other parts of the world.

Regular residents and individual meetings provide consultation opportunities for children. They attend review and planning meetings and are helped to understand the decision making process through discussions with keyworkers. This helps them to feel valued, advancing their confidence and self-esteem. A variety of methods including symbols and stickers help children to express their opinion. Children help with menus and offer feedback on the meals provided to inform future planning. They have significantly influenced the environment, bedrooms are personalised with posters and photographs. The care provided is responsive to the identified needs of children taking their wishes and feelings into account where appropriate.

Children know how to make a complaint and are often immediately vocal about any issues which allows them to be dealt with quickly. Child friendly information on how to make a complaint is provided and understood by children. Formal complaints are rare with just one unreasonable complaint made in the last year, it did not concern the welfare of children and action was taken to placate the complainant.

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

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

Children are safe in this home. They benefit from staffing numbers and an environment which allow for close supervision. Consequently there is a quick

response to any issue; this avoids escalation of difficult or destructive behaviour. Behaviour management plans and detailed assessments support effective responses to risk management while allowing children to take age appropriate risks as part of growing up. Children are helped to understand what constitutes bullying through discussion and detail is provided in the child friendly handbook to the home. Bullying is not an issue in this home.

Behaviour management focuses on praise, distraction and reward. Disciplinary measures are also used and include physical interventions to avoid injury or significant damage to property. Only staff trained in de-escalation techniques and safe practice restrain children. Staff and children are given the opportunity to discuss any issues following the use of restraint. Their views are recorded to inform behaviour management monitoring, the success of any intervention and in developing strategies to reduce the need to use physical interventions. The use of these techniques has reduced over time and particularly following a settling in period for some children. Individual schemes are not currently in place to provide clear understandable information to children about the rewards for acceptable behaviour.

The recruitment process involves the careful selection and monitoring of staff and they are closely supervised prior to completion of a six month probationary period. This practice supports the safeguarding of children and avoids inappropriate adults caring for them. Visitors to the home are identified and a record of their time on the premises ensures that only suitable and approved visitors have unsupervised access to children in the home. Staff complete an induction programme which includes training in how to safeguard children, regular refreshers are provided to ensure the staff know how to identify issues of abuse and protect children.

Children benefit from an environment that is physically safe and secure. Health and safety risk assessments identify and take action to reduce risks. Servicing checks on appliances and installations are undertaken and children take part in regular fire drills to practice evacuation of the building.

Staff are carefully chosen for their skills in working with the children in this home. They know the children well and would recognise unusual behaviour or anxieties. This may indicate something was upsetting a child and staff can take action to address this. Children have access to independent advocacy and numbers for agencies which support children if they are having any difficulties in the home. Attendance at school, regular contact with family and external monitoring of the home also contributes to keeping children safe and early identification of any issues.

Incidents of children going missing from the home are rare and have reduced over time, there have not been any incidents in recent months. Protocols with the police are in place to enable a speedy and safe return of children should any incidents occur.

## **Leadership and management**

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

The Statement of Purpose sets out the homes aims and objectives; it provides clear information for professionals and placing authorities and has recently been reviewed and updated to include staffing changes. A separate child friendly handbook is also available and the organisations website provides a good source of information especially for parents.

A Registered Manager is in place; she is clear about the needs of children and has the confidence and support of the staff team. Children benefit from the care provided by a staff team who enjoy their work and are effectively managed and appropriately supported within the larger organisation. The manager understands the strengths and weaknesses of the service and has a development plan in place to ensure progress.

Action taken to address the requirements and recommendations made at the last inspection has improved records. The recording of restraints is now clear and separate records demonstrate discussion between the manager and staff involved, in attempts to reduce these interventions. Improved records also evidence the reason for restraint to ensure it is not applied to force compliance. The information contained in children's files has been improved; consequently children are cared for in line with placing authority plans and the aims of the placement are clear and agreed. Attention to the maintenance and decoration of the home now provides a child friendly and homely environment.

Records are in place, they are detailed, comprehensive and well-ordered so that information is readily available and contributes to understanding the needs and progress of children and their development targets for the future.

Work in partnership with other agencies enhances the service to children. In addition to the significantly productive working partnership with the organisations education providers, the team have regular consultation opportunities with a psychologist. This helps the staff to understand behaviour and review behaviour management strategies. Productive relationships with health service and activity providers improves access to services and consequently the welfare of children.

A well trained and experienced staff team cares for children. Staff have a child care qualification or are working towards this. A training matrix is in place demonstrating that all staff take part in essential training on a regular basis. The Director of Care is significantly involved in the care and assessment of new admissions to the home. Children benefit from the consideration she gives to the appointment of a keyworker. This ensures they have the skills and character attributes to address the particular needs of the child they have a responsibility for. Supervision is provided on a regular basis and includes opportunities to develop child care skills. In addition there are opportunities to learn from reflecting on practice following significant events and restraints. Annual staff appraisals determine competence and identify development needs so that skills and knowledge continuously improve to benefit children.



## 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.