

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Alicea Churchward
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Date of last inspection	24/09/2012
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This service provides residential accommodation for up to five looked after young people, all with complex emotional and behavioural needs. The home is owned by a private company.

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**.

Young people live in a nurturing home environment that enables them to make good progress in all key aspects of their development. Young people enjoy warm and trusting relationships with staff and feel well supported by them.

Young people benefit from having clear boundaries and expectations of their behaviour. They say they feel happy and safe in this home and know that staff are there to support and protect them. Young people say that they are listened to, know that their views are important and that they have a positive impact on the running of the home.

Staff have a good knowledge of the young people in their care and work closely with them, their families and partner agencies to understand their individual needs and requirements. This ensures that young people receive effective and timely support enabling them to develop emotional resilience and build self-esteem that will ultimately assist them in achieving their goals.

The home is effectively and efficiently managed. The dedicated team of staff and managers are professional in their approach. They have high aspirations for the young people in their care and strive to help them achieve improved outcomes in all areas of their lives.

Parents, independent reviewing officers and placing social worker report very positively about the quality of care provided by the home. These comments include 'I have no hesitation in recommending this service to colleagues.' 'The manager is very

good and the staff are very committed.' Parents say, 'It's fantastic ... I am involved in (young person's) care ... I would love to be here myself ... it's lovely ... a nice place.' 'I like it, (young person) likes it too and (young person) is looked after properly.' Young people say, 'This is a good care home ... I would say it is outstanding ... staff and other young people are sound we all get along.'

As a result of this inspection, areas for development are identified which include: ensuring parents and young people are familiar with complaints procedures; ensuring robust monitoring of staff recruitment files to make sure that there are no gaps whatsoever in employment histories; training for all staff in risk assessment and safeguarding and making the whistle-blowing policy available to staff. Shortfalls have been identified with regard to improving the overall appearance of the home and making sure there are detailed arrangements for contact in placement plans.

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
27 (2001)	ensure that all staff undertake training; specifically in safeguarding (Regulation 27 (4)(a))	07/09/2013
24 (2001)	ensure that all parents are aware of the organisation's complaints procedure (Regulation 24 (2)(e)(ii))	07/09/2013
4 (2001)	ensure that the Statement of Purpose and children's guide make clear the organisation's arrangements for dealing with complaints (Regulation 4 (1) and Schedule 1 (23))	07/09/2013
26 (2001)	ensure that where that where any gaps are identified in staff employment histories that the recruitment files contain a satisfactory written explanation of any gaps in employment. (Regulation 26 (3)(d) and Schedule 2 (6))	07/09/2013

Recommendations

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

- ensure that the home provides a homely environment; specifically remove numbers from young people's bedroom doors and any distinguishing signs from the exterior of the premises and ensure the home is re-decorated where necessary (NMS 10.3)
- ensure that staff training covers health and safety issues. Staff are provided with

written guidelines on their health and safety; specifically that staff have risk assessments in relation to the work they are expected to undertake, in this case any maintenance and decoration required to the home (NMS 10.7)

- ensure that organisation's whistle-blowing policy is made known to all staff (NMS 16.7)
- ensure that the requirements of the placement plan are implemented in the day-to-day care of that child and include clear arrangements for contact. (NMS 25.2)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people have made good progress from their starting points. They are able to identify and take pride in the achievements they have made since moving to this home. Young people benefit from the stability of the staff group, enabling them to develop attachments and form trusting relationships. Young people recognise and appreciate the help and support they receive from staff, making it possible for them to explore and deal with a wide range of feelings and emotions. As a result of this, young people are successfully growing in confidence and learning and developing new skills.

Young people are further supported by a qualified therapist employed by the organisation who visits the home on a regular basis. This arrangement enables those young people to engage in individual therapeutic support sessions. The therapist also works closely with staff, offering advice and consultation on a regular basis. This ensures a consistency of care and support from staff that assists young people to move forward, making sense of their history and addressing current issues.

Young people benefit from regular access to health care professionals who meet both their routine and more individual healthcare needs. Young people are making good progress in respect of their education attendance and achievement in relation to their starting points. Young people are fully involved in the planning and review processes. This enables them to understand their objectives and targets, both at home and at school, and identify when progress has been made. Young people are encouraged by staff to celebrate their successes. This builds both confidence and self-esteem. Good communication between staff in the home and school supports this, ensuring a positive continuity of approach.

Young people enjoy regular, planned contact. This enables young people to maintain established relationships with family and friends and build new relationships with other significant family members. Social workers have praised the home's efforts in facilitating contact and building good channels of communication with families.

Young people enjoy participating in a wide range of activities in the home and in their local community. For some young people this has meant the opportunity to gain new experiences and learn new skills and for others this has given them the opportunity to develop their talents.

Young people in this home are well supported to learn skills that will equip them for future adult life. They are encouraged to participate in household tasks appropriate to their age and understanding and praised for doing so. Such tasks include keeping their own rooms tidy, helping with meal planning and preparation and taking care of their own laundry. Young people appreciate that their contribution to the home is recognised and valued.

Quality of care

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

Young people feel their views and opinions are actively sought about their care. There are regular house meetings and each young person has a one-to-one discussion with their key worker or co-key worker on a regular basis. The staff write down the young people's views and act on their suggestions where appropriate.

Young people are happy with the care they receive. One young person expressed that they were unsure about how to make a complaint, although they say that they do not need to because they like living in the home. Young people can identify staff and management to speak to if they have any worries or concerns; therefore the impact upon young people is low. Some complaints have been made and resolved appropriately.

Young people behave appropriately and get on well with the staff. Bullying had previously been an issue both in the home and at school. However, young people currently in placement say that there is no bullying in the home and are confident that staff will deal with it if it happens. Matters recently arising at school are in the process of being addressed; this swift response ensures that young people feel safe to discuss issues within the home.

Young people benefit overall from good placement plans. Staff helpfully facilitate contact, travelling with children to meet family members and supervising arrangements as is consistent with their care plan. However clear contact arrangements are not included in all of young people's placement plans sampled; in one case they are in a separate section of the young person's file but not clearly recorded in the placement plan to support the day to day arrangements in place; because this information could be located elsewhere this is having no impact upon the young person concerned.

Medication is securely held in a locked cabinet and staff are trained in safe handling of medication and the contents of the medicine cabinet are routinely monitored to ensure that there are no shortfalls.

The home is spacious, clean and generally homely in appearance, providing good facilities for the young people. However, young people's bedrooms are numbered and there is signage to the front entrance; these are not consistent with a domestic dwelling or fully homely appearance. The numbers were removed on the first day of this inspection. Some areas of the home would benefit from re-decoration. New sofas

for the main lounge have been purchased and new hall and stairs carpet have been fitted since the time of the last inspection

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people living in this home say they feel safe and protected by staff. Bullying is not identified as a problem in the home by any of the young people and they are aware that bullying is not tolerated within the home. Staff are aware of the need to deal with any potential issues quickly and when they occur they do resolve these without delay, ensuring young people to not feel victimised.

The home has robust child protection procedures in place that are easily accessed by care staff. All care staff have undertaken training in safeguarding and the organisation's whistle blowing policies. The same training has not been provided to other staff who do have regular contact with young people throughout the organisation so they are not familiar with safeguarding and whistleblowing procedures should they need to use them.

Staff are aware of young people's individual vulnerabilities and address and document these in individual risk assessment plans that are regularly reviewed and updated, with clear strategies in place to minimise risks. There have been occasions when young people have been missing but staff are familiar with local protocols and procedures and have acted appropriately when an incident occurs. Incidents are now reducing.

All staff receive mandatory training and regular refresher courses in behaviour management and physical intervention techniques. This ensures that they are familiar with current legislation and guidelines and able to safely intervene when physical intervention is deemed necessary. Physical interventions do occur but these are lessening in frequency and only occur when there is a need to protect a young person or others within the home. The home maintains well-documented records of all incidents of physical intervention. These appropriately include detail of precipitating events, those involved, the nature and duration of the intervention required and effectiveness. The records also reflect good practice, ensuring all those involved in the event are suitably de-briefed and their comments recorded.

The home strives to ensure that children live in a safe and secure environment. Fire fighting equipment and other utilities are regularly serviced and safety checks are carried out in accordance with recommended timescales to ensure that the home remains a safe environment for young people to live in. However, not all staff have had training that covers health and safety issues including risk assessments in relation to the work they are expected to undertake, in this case any maintenance and decoration required to the home; staff safety could be compromised.

Overall the home has a good recruitment and selection process. However, a short gap in an employment history was found in one file. Management are trained in safer

recruitment practices and ensure that all pre-employment checks are completed before new staff commence work within the home. Visitors sign in and have their credentials checked on arrival. These processes ensure that young people are not exposed to unsuitable persons who may do them harm.

Leadership and management

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

The home has a clearly-defined Statement of Purpose. The staff are aware of this document and of its significance in defining the function of the home and how it should operate. Children also receive a children's guide before they are admitted to the home and this contains useful and relevant information for them. In both documents, the complaints procedures are not clear, particularly for parents and young people.

The home is effectively managed by an experienced and qualified manager. They are supportive and accessible and they set clear structures and boundaries. Staff confirm the home has appropriate resources.

The home's capacity for continuous improvement is good. The management and staff in the home have realistic plans for the future and they ensure aspirations are high. At the last inspection the progress was judged as inadequate; this was because of medication monitoring; this matter has been fully addressed and means there are safe administration processes in place.

Staff are regularly supervised and participate in frequent staff meetings, where they have the opportunity to discuss the needs and plans for the young people in their care. All staff take part in an annual appraisal of their performance. This results in staff performance and development plans being established that acknowledge strengths in practice, as well as identifying any gaps in skill, knowledge or experience that can be addressed by training or further support. Staff report this to be valuable and an opportunity for them also to raise new ideas or initiatives. Staff describe the management and leadership team as very approachable, willing to listen to staff and act on their suggestions. Staff report excellent communication between management and the staff group which makes them feel highly valued and supported.

The Registered Manager closely monitors the care provided to young people and how they are progressing. This includes a monthly assessment of important indicators, such as the number of sanctions, restraints, occasions when a young person goes missing, and school attendance.

In accordance with legislation, an external person also visits the home once a month. They assess all the necessary issues to form an opinion of the standard of care provided. The home has a development plan and has been informed by feedback from parents, young people and placing social workers.

Young people's case records provide a full understanding of their life at the home.

Young people are involved in all statutory and internal reviews of their care plans. This helps young people to feel they have a real say in their care and in their futures.

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.