

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC053145
Inspection date	04/07/2013
Inspector	Gillian Walters
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	25/03/2013
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This privately run home is registered to accommodate three children or young people of either gender. It is registered to provide care for young people who may have behavioural or emotional difficulties. Lengths of stay may be short, medium or long term.

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**.

Some young people are very settled in this home and achieving positive outcomes in their lives. These young people feel safe and happy and share excellent relationships with the staff team. One young person commented, 'I love it here. Staff are brilliant; I get on well with everyone.' Other young people are less settled in their placement. They are not fully engaged with staff and the range of available support which would enable them to make good and consistent progress in all aspects of their development.

The home works closely with a range of professionals to ensure that young people's individual needs are well understood. Care planning is comprehensive to address their varied and complex needs. However, some young people are engaging in negative behaviour that includes them regularly going missing from the home. Such behaviour compromises the home's ability to effectively ensure their personal safety. The management and staff show appropriate concern for young people's welfare and are proactive in working in partnership with professionals to address their safeguarding needs and improve their outcomes.

Leaders and managers understand the particular strengths of the home and where weaknesses exist they have taken decisive action. Development plans are in place to secure further improvements.

As a result of this inspection six requirements and one recommendation have been made to promote further improvement. These relate to the home's admission

process, review of their missing from home procedure, frequency of staff supervision and recording issues specific to restraints, sanctions and young people's complaint documentation. A recommendation is made to guide improvements in the home's reporting in relation to Regulation 34.

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
11 (2001)	ensure that the children's home is conducted so as to promote and make proper provision for the welfare of children accommodated there. This specifically includes implementing a risk assessment regarding the impact of all admissions to the home (Regulation 11 (1)(a))	12/08/2013
16 (2001)	review and update the procedure to be followed when any child is absent without permission having regard to the relevant local authority and police protocols on missing children (Regulation 16(4)(b))	12/08/2013
17B (2001)	ensure that within 24 hours of the use of any measure of control, restraint or discipline that a written record is made that includes the effectiveness and any consequence of the use of the measure. This relates specifically to the effectiveness of sanctions that are imposed in response to negative behaviour (Regulation 17B(3)(f))	12/08/2013
17B (2001)	ensure that within 24 hours of the use of any measure of control, restraint or discipline that a written record is made that includes a description of any injury to the child concerned or any other person and any medical treatment administered (Regulation 17B(3)(g))	12/08/2013
24 (2001)	ensure that a written record is made of any complaint, the action taken in response, and the outcome of the investigation. This relates specifically to maintaining and being able to produce a comprehensive record of all complaints made by young people (Regulation 24(5))	12/08/2013
27 (2001)	ensure that all persons employed receive appropriate supervision. This relates specifically to the frequency of supervision in accordance with the home's agreed policy.(Regulation 27(4)(a))	12/08/2013

Recommendations

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

- ensure that in relation to Regulation 34, a copy of the monitoring report is completed at six monthly intervals, sent to Ofsted within 28 days of its completion and identifies any trends and issues of concern arising from monitoring of matters set out in Schedule 6. (Volume 5, 3.14)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **adequate**.

Young people benefit from living in an environment where staff understand the range of their individual needs. Staff are sensitive and attentive to ensuring they receive the support they require. Young people are encouraged to develop a positive self-view. This is addressed through careful care planning that takes account of their background, their experiences and ability to form and sustain attachments. Young people benefit from regular one-to-one sessions with staff that enables them to make sense of their histories and develop confidence in themselves and their abilities.

Young people are making variable progress in their placements. Some are enjoying life within the home, making positive achievements in all key areas of their development. These young people enjoy good health, are making good progress in their education and have developed successful relationships with staff. They also maintain good contact with family and friends who are important to them. As a result, the young people feel safe and secure, have developed good self-esteem and are emotionally resilient. These young people are active in preparing for their eventual independence and as a result are displaying maturity and possess realistic ambitions for their future learning and employment opportunities in adult life.

For some young people, the choices they make are having a detrimental effect on their ability to make the most of the opportunities available to them. These young people have poor engagement with education and are consequently not making positive educational progress, despite the appropriate efforts of staff to promote their learning.

Young people who go missing from the home are more vulnerable to harm in their community and placing their health and well-being at significant risk. This means that staff have increasing concerns about the suitability of some placements and the home's ability to successfully meet all young people's safeguarding needs.

Quality of care

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

Young people report to sharing good relationships with the majority of staff, although some young people would describe them as 'excellent.' Relationships

between members of staff and young people are warm, caring and supportive. This provides young people with good opportunities to form and develop appropriate attachments and trust. One young person commented, 'If I want help I know I can ask for it.'

Young people are confident in expressing their views and understand that their views are taken into account and, therefore, positively influence how the home is run. For example, young people make choices about how they wish to individualise their own personal space, the activities they wish to pursue and the meal options provided within the home.

Young people know how to make a complaint if there is something they are unhappy about. Staff actively promote children's rights; ensuring that young people are regularly made aware of advocacy and other support services and know how to access them. This ensures young people know their views are important and valued. It was noted during this inspection that one complaint had not been appropriately documented in the home's complaint record. Although the matter had been successfully dealt with, this omission meant that the record was incomplete and did not enable the home to provide a comprehensive overview of all complaints made.

Young people benefit from highly individualised care planning. This clearly takes account of the range and complexity of their needs and how these can be best met to ensure positive outcomes during their placement. Young people's cultural needs and personal identity is positively promoted in both their daily living and care planning. Managers and staff understand the need for a positive group dynamic that enables young people to live in harmony with one another and promotes positive encouragement, co-operation and support. However, it has been identified that the home's processes prior to admission are insufficiently robust to ensure proper consideration is routinely given to the impact of a new placement. Consequently, the potential exists for some young people to be inappropriately placed and the home's usual harmonious environment to be disrupted.

Young people benefit from the effective partnerships the home has established with a wide range of professionals and local services, including the police, schools and the looked after children nurse. As a result, appropriate services can be easily identified to provide support and guidance to ensure young people's physical, emotional and psychological health is promoted.

The home is located in a quiet rural area and blends well with the community. It is nicely furnished and maintained, providing a comfortable and homely environment for young people.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people describe the home as a safe place to live. They know that staff care for them and feel secure in the knowledge that there is always someone they can

Speak to if they have a worry or concern. Staff work well together to promote a safe and caring environment that enables young people to develop a good sense of security and well-being. Staff receive appropriate training in child protection and behaviour management and regularly update young people's individual risk assessments and behaviour management plans. This ensures that they have sufficient knowledge and skills to protect young people from harm such as abuse, exploitation, and bullying.

Staff take all reasonable steps to anticipate and manage the challenges and behaviours some young people present. On occasions, when young people have chosen to absent themselves or go missing from the home, staff have appropriately followed procedures and guidance to ensure their swift return. The home has developed close working relationships with community police to locate and promote the safety and well-being of young people when absent from the home.

Staff effectively seek to plan with partner agencies when risks are not seen to be diminishing to establish alternative strategies to keep young people safe. Staff maintain and document good practice in relation to those young people who do go missing. However, recent revisions to the locally agreed protocol have not yet been reflected in the home's own missing from care procedure. This means that there is no guarantee that staff share the same understanding of expectations placed on them.

Young people live in a home where positive behaviour is promoted. Young people receive praise and rewards for positive behaviour and understand that at times the use of sanctions may be used as a consequence for less desirable behaviour. Clear documentation support occasions when young people have received either rewards or consequences in relation to their behaviour. However, the records maintained do not identify the impact or effectiveness of those occasions when sanctions are imposed. This means an opportunity is lost to evaluate and potentially improve practice.

The use of restraint is only used as a last resort and always in accordance with the legal framework. Generally records are well maintained, documenting clearly the information required by regulation to reflect the circumstances of the restraints that have occurred. However, on one occasion a reported injury was not fully detailed, leaving the record incomplete.

Young people live in a home that is physically safe and appropriately secure. Good health and safety arrangements exist within the home ensuring that all potential risks are assessed and action is taken to reduce or eliminate them. Fire safety is taken seriously with routine checks and maintenance ensuring that fire detection and fire fighting equipment remains in good working order. Young people and staff regularly participate in fire evacuation drills to ensure that they have practiced what to do in the event of a real emergency.

The home has sound recruitment practices in place to ensure that only adults who are deemed suitable to work with children are employed. All visitors to the home are

appropriately checked on arrival and have their details recorded in the visitors' book. This means young people are not exposed to adults who may do them harm.

Leadership and management

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

The home is effectively managed by an experienced Registered Manager who is committed to providing a caring and nurturing environment that will positively improve young people's life chances. The home was judged to be making good progress at the interim inspection on 25 March 2013 and was showing capacity for further improvement. There were no requirements or recommendations made at that time.

Since the last inspection the Registered Manager and his staff acknowledge that the home has experienced a difficult period in managing the challenges and behaviours of some young people. They identified this as having caused disruption to the home's usual routine. However, staff confirm that throughout this period they have always felt well supported by their manager and been able to be supportive of each other. As a result they have been able to maintain the provision of consistent care and support for all young people.

Staff comment positively on the support and guidance they receive. However, some shortfalls were identified in the provision of formal supervision for staff that did not meet with the organisation's agreed regular frequency. This means that there were some missed opportunities for staff to receive more formal guidance and support.

Staff have had limited opportunities for training in the last few months since the last inspection. However, the Provider has already recognised weakness in the area of staff development. Consequently, they have appointed an in-house training officer to develop new training packages that will enhance staff learning and development.

The Provider has suitable quality assurance arrangements in place for both internal and external monitoring of the home. The Registered Manager has maintained appropriate oversight of the service, routinely monitoring activity and the quality of care within the home. The Registered Manager has provided Ofsted with a review of monitoring activity over a six-month period in accordance with Regulation 34. However, this did not sufficiently evaluate activity, identifying trends or patterns that would helpfully inform further improvements.

The home has performed well in keeping Ofsted and other relevant parties involved of all significant events involving young people living at the home. This has ensured regulatory oversight between inspections and allowed professionals to work closely together to negotiate and address concerns regarding young people's behaviour.

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.