

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Rebecca Sharp
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The children's home is provided by a private company and cares for up to six children and young people of either gender. The home is registered to care for children and young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties. Most of the children and young people are cared for in the main house but one child is also cared for in a detached bungalow situated in the rear garden.

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**.

Young people enjoy living at the home. They are happy with the standard of care they receive. Young people's well-being is promoted by open and positive relationships with staff. For some young people, they regard staff as 'family'. They are confident in the home's complaints procedure and have access to external agencies in which to share their views.

Young people are supported to take age appropriate risks, based on their individual abilities and understanding. Staff have a sound understanding of safe working practices and demonstrate these in their daily practice. Some young people display challenging and unsafe behaviour at times. The manager and staff work hard to reduce risks and are competent, knowledgeable and proactive in keeping young people safe.

Each young person is respected as an individual, with care plans tailored to their needs. The ethos of the home promotes young people to make progress during their time living there. This is because young people receive well personalised care. Some young people have made significant progress in many areas of their lives particularly in education, behaviour and independence skills.

The views of the young people are central to the running of the home and young people contribute to its operational running. The manager is proactive in responding to young people's views and requests. Therefore, they feel listened to by staff. There

are also plenty of opportunities for young people to express their opinions and to contribute to their own care during their placement.

The manager has secured improvements and has worked on both recommendations set at the last inspection. However, where one is fully completed, the other is not and has been escalated to a requirement. Work has taken place with regard to this issue which is in relation to notifications to Ofsted. However, the system put in place by the manager does not ensure Ofsted receive all necessary information within the required timescales. There is one other requirement set at this inspection regarding staff supervision, which is irregular for some staff, especially those in their probationary period. There are also two recommendations made from this inspection. The first is regarding the maintenance of a homely environment. The other recommendation is in relation to adhering to company policy and procedure in the storage of confidential records and sensitive information.

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 receive appropriate supervision (Regulation 27 (4) (a))	17/06/2013
30 (2001)	establish and maintain a system whereby, if any of the events listed in Schedule 5 takes place, the registered person shall without delay notify the relevant persons. (Regulation 30 (1) Schedule 5)	17/06/2013

Recommendations

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

- ensure the home provides a comfortable and homely environment and is well maintained. This is in relation to the outside areas (NMS 10.3)
- ensure the home implements its own policy on the keeping and retention of files, and managing confidential information. This is with specific regard to the storage of staff files. (NMS 22.1)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **adequate**.

Young people enjoy good health. Most young people have a good understanding of key health issues and risks. There are good relationships with the Looked After Children (LAC) nurse who visits regularly. This ensures that there are plenty of opportunities for young people to talk to someone outside of the home, about their health issues. Therefore, young people's understanding of such issues has improved.

Young people receive excellent practical and emotional support to maintain and develop contact with families and those who are important to them. As a result of the support from staff, some young people have developed a close network of friends in the area. This has enabled them to form positive attachments, and consequently, their confidence and self-esteem has improved.

Age appropriate independence skills are developed in line with individuals care plans. This increases young people's confidence and readiness to live in the adult world. For example, young people who are nearing independence, receive a weekly budget in line with the amount they would receive in the community. Young people prepare their own meals and are educated by staff regarding appropriate budgeting skills. Young people also complete domestic chores as appropriate to their age. For some young people, this has been highly effective and has enabled them to transition successfully into independent living.

Educational outcomes for young people in the home are variable. Some young people are achieving exceptional academic outcomes. Attendance for those individuals is excellent. For other young people, their risk taking behaviours have resulted in a decline in their school attendance and progress. This does not enable them to develop to their full potential. Staff liaise well with social workers and education agencies, however there has been a significant delay for some young people in identifying suitable, and stable educational placements. While staff have been proactive in supporting interim arrangements for individuals, this has meant their learning has been disrupted and their development stifled. However, although some placements are in their infancy, progress in attendance and social interaction is promising.

Quality of care

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

Professionals have a generally positive view of the service and one social worker describes the service as 'very accommodating' in meeting the needs of the young people. They attribute individual's reduction in risk taking behaviour to the quality of the relationships staff have built with them. Another social worker commented that the home, 'Have done really well in making (the young person) feel comfortable and happy.'

The commitment to promoting equality and diversity is evident in the staffing, planning and delivery of care and the focus this has on the child. For example, ensuring consistency of staffing in the bungalow where young people are supported

in a solo placement. This was a recommendation from the last inspection. Staff say this has enabled individuals to make progress in some areas such as developing positive attachments and reducing aspects of challenging behaviour.

Staff know children well and share information correctly with all appropriate agencies. Internal placement plans are highly detailed and support outcomes set out in young people's statutory care plans. The manager has implemented a new medication system since the last inspection, which ensures the administration of medication is highly safe and effective.

The environment is safe and fit for purpose. It is furnished and decorated to a high standard and has benefitted from extensive refurbishment since the last inspection. There is space for communal and private activities and easy access to a good garden for outdoor play. Young people's bedrooms are a good size and highly personalised to individuals tastes. However, a recommendation has been made in relation to the maintenance of the home. In particular, the outside areas for example; in order to ensure they are free from smoking debris. This does not promote a homely, well maintained or healthy living environment for young people or visitors.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people are well protected in this home. There are procedures to ensure that their safety and welfare is effectively managed. For some young people, their sense of safety is improving through the consistency of staff practice. Risk assessments are highly detailed and staff are skilled in their approach to risk management. Their complex risks are extremely well managed through the risk assessment process. Also, the manager is very proactive about making decisions about the safety and welfare for young people. Where concerns have arisen, she informs the placing authority at the earliest opportunity in order to agree strategies to be put into place to reduce future risks. She keeps the safety and welfare of young people at the centre of her decision making process at all times.

Procedures and practices relating to young people going missing are robust and help to further protect them from the risk of harm. The staff are very vigilant in ensuring that the risk assessments and protocols in this area are consistently followed. Despite these procedures and the best efforts from staff, young people have been missing from the home, however instances are minimal. Records in relation to these instances have recently been updated in order to exceed the minimum standard of information required.

The staff and manager ensure that other professionals are working with the most up-to-date information and have developed very effective and positive relationships with the police, missing from care team and placing authorities. These positive relationships help to keep young people safe. This is because a picture can be built up more quickly about any emerging safety issues.

Staff work hard to enable young people to develop more socially acceptable behaviours. This assists them to become accepted members of the wider community. The trusting relationships that young people have with staff, enable them to explore behavioural issues. Staff invest a lot of time in supporting young people with the difficulties they face. They try to get to the root of the problem so that the issue can be fully understood. In turn, this helps young people to improve their behaviour and mature into more self-aware and confident young people.

Young people live in a safe and secure home where they can learn about personal safety and further develop their independence. Young people are further protected by effective and robust staff recruitment practices. Despite the recruitment records being managed centrally within the company, the manager ensures that she assesses the documentation herself. This ensures that all staff have been assessed as safe to work with young people.

Leadership and management

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

Young people live in a home that meets the Statement of Purpose. The document informs young people, their families and placing authorities about the services provided by the home. The home also has a young people's guide in DVD form which ensures that young people know what to expect from the services provided. It has been devised by young people in other homes within the company and includes information they feel is pertinent to their experience, therefore is very user-friendly.

Young people have opportunities to develop and progress because the manager is knowledgeable about the needs of the young people and the management of the home. As a result, she can fully demonstrate the impact and value that living at the home has for individuals. Staff speak highly of her commitment and say they, 'Can't fault the running of the home.'

Monitoring takes place through monthly inspections and a realistic development plan enables the manager to evidence improvements made and to plan for further developments. The company complete its own inspections of the home and visit every month. The reports are submitted to Ofsted. Any shortfalls identified through this monitoring are tackled quickly by the manager and staff. Young people are asked their views during these visits. This allows for them to tell the visitor what they think about their care. Young people also feel able to tell staff or the manager if they have a problem and feel confident in doing so. This helps to further promote young people's well-being and protect them from harm.

The manager is exceptionally keen to improve and progress. She has implemented a number of new systems and procedures since the last inspection. While these go some way in improving the efficiency of staff in certain areas; the impact on the outcomes of young people are yet to be fully recognised.

The manager has ensured that action has been taken to address the two

recommendations identified at the last inspection. The staff team have been divided between the main house and the bungalow to ensure young people experience consistent care from a core group of adults. There has also been progress made on the other recommendation around notifying Ofsted of significant events. All necessary incidents have been notified to HMCI, however, the system implemented by the manager means that there is a delay in Ofsted receiving a full account of incidents, especially over a weekend. Due to the continual failure to meet this recommendation, and the impact on Ofsted's ability to effectively monitor the service; this has escalated to a requirement at this inspection.

Further shortfalls have been identified at this inspection. Staff files, containing highly sensitive and confidential information are stored, un-secured in a spare bedroom on the ground floor. Although only the manager and deputy have access to this room by key, this does not adequately safeguard this information, for example, from intruders if the home were broken into. Additionally, staff; including the manager, do not receive regular supervision. This means staff practice is not regularly reviewed, nor is their development supported adequately. This is especially detrimental to the development of staff who are new to their roles and in their probationary period; and potentially impacts negatively on the quality of care provided by the home

Despite the lack of regular supervision, staff feel well supported by the manager. There is a full training programme which ensures that the staff are skilled in their work with young people. The recruitment of a company training facilitator has expanded the range of staff training and exposed the team to new and relevant training opportunities. The manager ensures the staff have every opportunity to fully discuss young people's needs and progress. They are reflective and open to new ideas to benefit children. There are a sufficient number of experienced and competent staff working at the home. The manager also ensures that staffing levels are responsive to the current and changing needs of the young people. Team working is also very effective; this assists young people to have very clear boundaries and to know what is expected of them. This helps them to develop, particularly with aspects of their safety and their 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.