

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Wendy Anderson
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Service information

Brief description of the service

A private organisation owns and operates this children's home. The setting supports and cares for one young person of either sex who has complex emotional and behavioural difficulties. The unit specialises in the care of more vulnerable individuals who may be at risk or pose a specific risk to others and/or themselves.

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 make good progress in relation to their starting points on admission to the home in all aspects of their care, well-being and education. This is due to the nurturing environment the staff team have created. This staff team are very young-person focused and the team has been complied to specifically meet the needs of the young people placed at the home. Care planning is highly individualised and frequently reviewed and updated. However, the looked after children documentation held by the home is not specific for them, it is for a previous placement. Staff have a comprehensive understanding of the needs of the young people placed as well as the organisation's policies and procedures. This knowledge ensures the young people receive constant boundaries and care.

Young people are happy at the home and feel they are well looked after. This view is also held by external professionals who work with the home.

Leadership at the home is good and the manager is aware of and understands the areas which require further development. In addition to the shortfalls in documentation as detailed above these include, ensuring staff receive supervision at the timescales outlined by the organisation's policy and ensuring young people have individual education 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
28 (2001)	ensure in respect of each child who is accommodated in the children's home there is a record in permanent form which includes the information, documents and records specified in Schedule 3. In particular looked after children's documents specific to the home and an individual education plan (Regulation 28 (1(a) Schedule 3))	30/11/2012
32 (2001)	ensure adequate precautions against the risk of fire, including the provision of suitable fire equipment. In particular ensure all required fire checks are carried out prior to a young person being admitted after a period of closure. (Regulation 32 (a))	30/11/2012

Recommendations

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

- ensure staff receive regular supervision in line with the organisation's policy (NMS 19.4)
- ensure avoidable hazards are removed as is consistent with a domestic setting. In particular the home's refrigerator must operate within the temperature ranges states by the Environmental Health Office. NMS 10.3

Outcomes for children and young people

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

The home provides young people with a warm and nurturing environment in which to grow and develop. Young people make good progress from their starting points in all aspects of their care. This includes them developing self-confidence, self-worth and an understanding of their backgrounds, including what brought them into care.

Incidents of restraint and missing from home have dramatically reduced and young people have engaged with staff. Young people receive consistent messages from staff about their behaviour and what is expected of them. When there are incidents these are thoroughly discussed with the young people to raise their awareness about the impact of their behaviours on them and others. Young people said they felt this approach works as they knew where they stood. Feedback from fellow professionals is positive in this area with one saying, 'The young person I work with who lives

there now is much more settled and self-reports how he is much happier there. He was offending every month (literally) and since he moved to the home his offending has ceased.'

The staff team has developed good working relationships with fellow professionals and external agencies which ensure that the young people receive the help they need to address their physical, emotional and psychological needs.

Young people lead a healthy lifestyle with support and encouragement from staff. Young people are fully involved in the menu plans, which are varied and well balanced. They enjoy good health and attend all required medical appointments. The range of activities also mean young people maintain a healthy lifestyle. The staff work with the young people to identify their individual interests and support them to pursue them. This includes young people joining local sports clubs and accessing activities in the local community.

Young people are supported by staff to maintain contact with their families and friends. Young people are encouraged to make friends in the local community, and friends are made to feel welcome by the staff team. There is also evidence of young people being able to stay overnight at their friends' homes and vice versa.

Young people engage in education with very positive results, including returning to education after a substantial period of time away.

Staff also provide young people with good support in preparing for independence and adulthood. This includes young people being involved in shopping and cooking meals as well as financial budgeting.

Quality of care

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

Young people receive consistent good quality care from the home. Young people said they like living at the home, are well looked after by the staff team and feel safe.

Young people have very positive relationships with the staff team, who are very young-person centred. These relationships provide a strong basis for the work the team undertakes. Staff have detailed knowledge of the young people in the home, which enables them to develop very detailed individualised care plans. These plans are devised with input from the young person, include information gathered from the placing social workers and cover all aspects of the young person's lives.

There are separate plans relating to the young person's behaviour, including managing them during a crisis. These identify young people's behaviours and vulnerabilities and clearly set out strategies to address these. The strategies include working with the young people on managing their own behaviours by using the positive reinforcement of good behaviours and consequences for negative behaviours. They also enable young people to develop skills to resolve conflict

through negotiation not aggression and to develop positive relationships based on respect, trust and acceptance of individuality. Plans are frequently reviewed and updated in light of young people's development. However, the Looked After Children documentation held by the home which is provided by the placing authority is not specific to the home where the young person is currently living but for the young person's previous placement and is therefore out of date.

Consultation with young people at the home is good and is seen as a key part of providing young people with a high standard of care. The staff regard it as essential for young people to be involved in all aspects of their care and in the day-to-day running of the home. This approach enables young people to develop skills which assist them in life after they leave care including the ability to understand that it is not always possible to have what you want when you want it. This is achieved by the staff being open and honest with the young people and explaining to them why it is not possible to implement all of their suggestions, requests or ideas. Various methods are used to seek the young people's views, including surveys, house meetings, discussions during mealtimes and daily feedback sheets. There is also consultation with placing social workers, independent reviewing officers and young people's parents or guardians. Information gathered from these consultation activities are then used to further develop the work undertaken at the home. Feedback from external professionals who work with the home is very positive and include the following comments, 'I have found the staff at (the home) to be helpful and knowledgeable. They are friendly and respectful both to me, other professionals and the young person living at the home.'

The staff team regard education as a very important part of the young people's growth and development. They work intensively with the young people to engage them with education and have succeeded in this; young people are now very positive about attending school after having some very negative experiences in the past. However, currently one young person is awaiting completion of their individual education plan. The home also looks at education in the wider sense, which includes working with the young people to understand their origins, backgrounds and what brought them into care. This work takes place during individual sessions which are planned with the young person. Linked to this is the home's independence programme which has been recently developed.

Young people are able to engage in a wide range of activities, both in the home and in the local community. This includes young people being members of local sports clubs as well as pursuing their individual hobbies and interests.

Healthcare at the home is good and young people are encouraged and enabled to have a healthy lifestyle. They attend all the required health appointments and also have access to both in-house and external professionals for additional support when required. If a young person initially refuses to attend or take part in these appointments the staff work with the young person to encourage and support them to attend. Comprehensive records of healthcare issues are maintained. Staff receive regular training on health-related topics.

Young people have a very clear understanding of the home's complaints process; information is contained in the young people's guide and on notice boards in the home. Young people said they feel confident that if they made a complaint staff would deal with it straight away. The home's complaints procedure is comprehensive and adhered to in practice.

Accommodation at the home ranges from adequate to good. The home has recently gone through a period of decoration and refurbishment. All that remains to be completed are the hall, stairwell and the bathroom; this work is scheduled to be carried out. The home has a welcoming friendly atmosphere and the young people said they enjoy living there. Young people said they like their bedrooms; they have not finished personalising them as they have not made a decision about how they would like to do this.

The home provides young people with a healthy well-balanced diet and young people are fully involved in the development of the menu. They are also encouraged to become involved in the preparation of meals. Staff undertake food hygiene training on a regular basis. However the temperature of the home's refrigerator has consistently been outside the recommended temperatures given by the Environmental Health Office; this means some food stuffs have been inappropriately stored.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people said they feel very safe at the home and could identify a number of staff they would feel comfortable raising any issues with. They said all the staff are approachable and friendly. Young people said that bullying at the home was not an issue and there is clear evidence within the home's records of work being undertaken, with young people, on the issue of bullying.

The home has very robust policies and procedures to safeguard the well-being of young people placed; these are adhered to. Staff receive training in safeguarding issues which is regularly updated. The work the team carries out in robustly identifying each young person's needs and vulnerabilities, and developing and reviewing individual plans and risk assessments, supports these processes and keeps young people safe. The young people are fully involved in the development of these plans as the staff feel it is key for them to understand their behaviours, take ownership of them and develop self-management.

The home uses restraint as a last resort. Previously restraint had to be used a number of times, this has now dramatically dropped and behaviour has drastically improved. Records of restraint and incidents are well maintained and regularly monitored by the manager.

The home has clear, robust policies and procedures for dealing with young people who go missing from the home, which are in line with local authority and police

protocols. Since the home reopened in June 2012 there have been no young people absent without authority. Previously, there had been a high number. Currently young people are not engaging in risk-taking behaviours, which is a marked improvement for the young people placed.

The organisation has a robust staff recruitment and vetting procedure which is applied in practice, helping to prevent unsuitable persons from having the opportunity to harm young people.

The arrangements for fire safety are generally sound and supported by the implementation of robust risk assessments and health and safety policies and procedures. However, there was a brief lapse in the implementation of the testing of the fire safety equipment and warning systems when the home reopened. This was identified during the manager's monitoring and appropriate action was taken to ensure the safety of young people and those working in the home.

Leadership and management

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

There were two recommendations made at the last inspection and these have been addressed. The home now records the views of the young people in relation to any sanction, disciplinary measures or restraints used and also records that medical assistance has been offered following a restraint. Consultation has improved and now includes feedback from young people, where possible, their relatives and staff as part of the Regulation 33 visit. This information is then reviewed and has been used to improve the home's practice.

The home has a detailed Statement of Purpose which reflects the current work the home is undertaking. Appropriate monitoring takes place through the visits undertaken on behalf of the provider as required by Regulation 33, and internal quality assurance under Regulation 34. Young people's files and information are well organised and stored securely.

The provider creatively deploys staff to enhance young people's attachments and build on trust. They have transferred familiar staff from other services to ensure that young people have consistent, secure relationships with adults. The manager said that the staff team are excellent, very committed and a very knowledgeable group of people. Staff are qualified for the work they undertake and appropriately trained to undertake their roles. Staff rotas are clear and reflect that there are a sufficient number of staff on duty to meet the needs of the young people. This provides young people with a group of adults who are known to them and who are working with them in a consistent way.

The staff are very committed and enthusiastic and consistently have young people at the heart of the work they carry out. They are proactive rather than reactive in the way they work with young people. They identify behaviours and triggers for unacceptable behaviour; they put strategies in place to support young people to

modify their unacceptable behaviour.

Staff are empowered to express their ideas and views during: team meetings, their individual supervision sessions and their annual appraisals. Staff supervision is taking place, but a small number of the staff team have not received this as frequently as the organisation's policy dictates. Minutes of supervision sessions are of a good quality and cover all required areas. The organisation has recently revised its appraisal system which is comprehensive and effective. This ensures staff training needs are identified and met, and that they have the competencies to care for children appropriately.

The home has an appropriate system in place for the notification of significant events to the required bodies; this is adhered too.

The staff have established good relationships within the local community. This enables the young people to live in an accepting community where any issues are openly addressed. The staff feel this approach is an important learning point for the young people which will help them in later life by providing them with a positive example of community life.

The home has a development plan that includes information gathered from the robust monitoring systems the manager has in place.

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.