

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Sharron Escott
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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.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: a service that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

Good: a service that exceeds minimum requirements

Satisfactory: a service that only meets minimum requirements

Inadequate: a service that does not meet minimum requirements

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 between the ages of 12 and 17 years 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.

Overall effectiveness

The overall effectiveness is judged to be **satisfactory**.

The quality of care is satisfactory, young people are making positive progress and achieving some reasonable outcomes in relation to their starting points. Young people have reported that they like living in the home and feel safe. They recognise that generally measures are in place to protect them and keep them safe. A young person stated: 'Staff help me a lot, my key worker is great he spends lots of time with me.'

Positive relationships are being formed with young people. The manager and care team are clear about the aims and objectives required to support young people to achieve positive outcomes. Young people are cared for in a supportive environment. However, high use of agency staff has impacted on some aspects of the continuity of care for the young people.

To further improve, the manager must ensure the young people have an up-to-date care plan and ensure children are involved in their care planning and in the monitoring of the home. This is to provide them with opportunities for their views, wishes, feelings and any for concerns they have to be taken seriously. Also the manager must ensure no more than half the staff on duty are from an external agency, and that agency staff are not the responsible individuals to lead and manage a shift.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure the views of the child, the child's family, and social worker are sought regularly on the child's care (NMS 1.4)

- ensure no more than half the staff on duty are from an external agency and that they do not lead shifts (NMS 17.5 and 17.8)
- ensure the children of the home are regularly involved in contributing to the monitoring the operation of the home, and their views and any concerns are seriously taken into account (NMS 21.1)
- ensure the home contacts placing authorities to request statutory reviews, and if a change to the care plan is needed. (NMS 25.5)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people enjoy spending time and talking with family and friends, which ensures they maintain important significant relationships. As a result this supports their sense of identity and knowledge of their family background to help them make sense of their lives.

Young people attend a full-time educational learning programme, and they are achieving satisfactory outcomes. Young people's attendance is good; they are encouraged to make the most of their opportunities. Educational resources in the home are good, which supports their continued learning beyond the school day.

Young people are encouraged to make a positive contribution to the running of the home; this includes providing incentives for them to complete tasks and share cleaning chores. This encourages young people to develop their independent living skills and celebrates achievements made.

Young people are healthy and are encouraged to consider healthy choices during menu planning. Young people and staff eat together, promoting a positive social occasion and developing young people's social skills. Young people enjoy a balanced and varied diet, which reflects their personal preferences. One young person said, 'the food is good' and could identify individual staff members who make special dishes that they enjoy.

Young people benefit from individual activities which they can choose; this promotes their physical health and positive social experiences. Young people confirm they are cared for when ill and staff are approachable and kind.

Quality of care

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

Young people benefit from positive relationships with the core staff team. Staff relate well to young people and conversations are relaxed, good humoured and adjusted to meet each individual's level of understanding. One young person stated, 'it's good here, the staff support and help me and that makes me feel better about myself.'

Young people are encouraged to identify their own sanctions; they consider this process to be fair and reasonable. Young people's positive engagement has enabled individuals to achieve positive outcomes. Young people are consulted, verbally, about their daily living choices. They are invited to attend a young people's meeting weekly and regular key worker sessions; the minutes of these formal and informal meetings do not always show that the young people's wishes and views are responded to or acted upon.

Young people are not fully involved in the planning of all aspects of their care. Looked after children's reviews have been cancelled, resulting in the local authority care plans not identifying changes in young people's placement and changing care needs. The home's own care plans are factually detailed but do not provide the young people with an opportunity to contribute their views, wishes and feelings. Therefore young people have not been consulted, nor have they contributed to identifying their care needs and the development of plans for their future. Young people know how to complain and are confident to do so. Young people say that they have not raised any concerns with the home about their care.

Young people's general health care needs are met and maintaining a healthy life style is incorporated into activity schedules. Young people enjoy a full activity schedule that includes fishing, walking, swimming, and seeing friends.

Minimal quantities of medicines are kept in the home and the service ensures that medicines are kept safe and secure. All care staff receive training in administering medicines. The arrangements for dealing with medication are safe and appropriately recorded.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people report they like living in the home and feel safe. Staff are aware of the particular vulnerabilities of individuals and follow the home's care plans and risk assessments to manage and minimise risks. Young people do not identify bullying as a concern. One young person states: 'I like it here, the staff help me a lot; I wouldn't want to change anything.'

Care staff maintain an open and supportive dialogue with young people, their respective placing authorities and the local safeguarding team. The core staff team are knowledgeable about safeguarding practice and follow procedures effectively when any safeguarding matters arise. Missing from home records detail action taken when a young person goes missing and there is joint agency working to safeguard young people in line with agreed protocols. Staff receive sufficient training which focuses on the protection of young people. Significant events relating to protecting young people are appropriately referred to the Local Authority Designated Officer.

Young people say they have been restrained on a number of occasions by care staff; however, they say that when this has happened they understand why and feel it is appropriate, reasonable and fair. Care staff receive training in the use of de-escalation and restraint. Sanctions for inappropriate behaviour enable the young people to reflect and learn from their behaviour. Young people say they are reasonable and fair. The monitoring of sanctions is good, the effectiveness and appropriateness is well recorded, and the use of sanctions supports the young people to achieve improved outcomes.

Young people benefit from an environment that is physically safe and appropriately secure. All young people have their own rooms; this promotes their rights to privacy and personal space. The home is adequately sized; however, many areas are looking tired and worn with little evidence of a homely, welcoming and individualised environment. Although this is an area where improvements could be made, it is not unsatisfactory.

Recruitment practice is effective and ensures new staff and volunteers are suitably vetted before they work with young people. However, due to excessive agency use, the staffing rota identifies external agency staff exceeding half the staff on duty and leading shifts, resulting in young people not always receiving continuity of care by suitably trained and experienced staff.

Leadership and management

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

The home is managed by an experienced manager who has the support and respect of a newly identified staff team. Senior staff keep up to date with new information and legislation, and this is shared with the team through regular meetings. Staff talk positively about the support they receive and confirm that handovers, team discussions and supervisions are carried out on a regular basis and enable them to reflect on their practice and relationships with young people.

Staff undertake induction training and regulatory training which provides them with skills, knowledge and competencies required to meet the needs of the young people. The home has a detailed Statement of Purpose that outlines the services it offers; this is regularly reviewed and accessible to the young people, parents and social workers. The young person's guide is detailed and age appropriate.

The manager is currently recruiting for new staff members, as the home is currently under resourced to meet the young people's needs. As a result, the use of external agency staff has been high. The manager has recognised this and has arranged agency support that consists of a dedicated team of three until the recruitment process has been completed. The core staff team are enthusiastic about their work and their commitment to supporting young people in staying safe and achieving good outcomes.

There are good monitoring activities related to the quality of care provided to young

people. For example, the manager regularly monitors the quality of care given to young people and identifies any emerging patterns and trends; however, young people's views and experiences are not included in the home's monitoring activities and planned development. Record keeping is generally very good, with the introduction of new robust systems to monitor the development and progress young people make. Weekly summaries contribute towards the home's care plan objectives and subsequent statutory reviews. Monthly visits by a designated person have also been occurring. The home's office is well organised, information is kept up to date and recording is made in a professional way. Records are held securely in a locked office.

All previous recommendations have been met. The manager now ensures that regular fire drills take place and any sanctions or disciplinary measures are monitored and recorded to establish if they are effective.

Equality and diversity practice is **satisfactory**.