

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC061837
Inspection date	11/07/2012
Inspector	Elizabeth Barrett
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	08/02/2012
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This privately owned home offers services for up to four children and young people, with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

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 continue to make good individual progress in this home, and receive positive care and support in meeting their placement needs. The home has individual plans for each young person, and adapts its strategies to encourage young people to engage with staff and the home. Young people achieve good levels of educational attendance and attainment; they are self-motivated and working confidently towards realising their potential. They grow in maturity and individual identity, developing skills to prepare for independence.

This home has experienced a significant period of change. The provider has introduced a transitional action plan dedicated to developing a cohesive staff and management team, with every effort made to maintain a stable and secure home for young people. The commitment of the homes acting management team, and the effective partnerships with other agencies has meant young people continue to receive a good, level of care.

Safeguarding is promoted and facilitated, with young people developing an improved understanding of individual safeguarding needs. The safety and welfare needs of young people are further improving, through the development of daily routines and structures. Managers recognise the home's strengths and weaknesses, and plans are in place to address these shortfalls. This service places a clear focus on the need to improve all aspects of the homes care and support, of young people.

There are four statutory requirements and five recommendations set as a result of this inspection. Shortfalls are identified in the Statement of Purpose, record keeping, monitoring of placement plans, complaints and physical intervention records,

updating behaviour management and discipline plans, and consultation with young people.

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
5 (2001)	keep under review and, where appropriate, revise the statement of purpose to include all matters listed in Schedule 1 (Regulation 5 (a))	31/08/2012
17B (2001)	ensure that within 24 hours of the use of any measure of control, restraint or discipline in a children's home, a written record is made of which shall include, confirmation that the person authorised by the registered provider to make a record has spoken to the child concerned and the person using the measure about the use of the measure (Regulation 17B (3) (h))	31/08/2012
24 (2001)	maintain a written record of any complaint, the action taken in response, and the outcome of the investigation (Regulation 24 (5))	31/08/2012
28 (2001)	maintain in respect of each child accommodated in a children's home a record in permanent form, as specified in Schedule 3 which includes a current copy of any plan for the care of the child prepared by his placing authority, and of the placement plan. (Regulation 28 (1))	31/08/2012

Recommendations

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

- ensure all children communicate their views on all aspects of their care and support, in particular ensure their views are fully considered and included in their placement plans in the home (NMS 1.3)
- ensure the home has a clear policy on managing behaviour, which includes current behaviour management plans and risk assessments, supporting positive behaviour, de-escalation of conflicts, discipline and control, that all staff understand and apply at all times (NMS 3.3)
- ensure that sanctions for behaviour are clear, individually applied, reasonable and fair, particularly in the use of financial sanctions, understood by all staff and children (NMS 3.8)

- ensure all staff in the home are trained in appropriate safe-care practice, including skills to care for children who have been abused, and in all matters relating to the local authority safeguarding procedures (NMS 4.6)
- ensure the manager regularly monitors in line with regulations, all records kept by the home to ensure compliance with the homes policies, to identify any concerns about specific incidents and to identify patterns and trends. Immediate action is taken to address any issues raised by this monitoring. (NMS 21.2)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people make positive progress at this home. Some young people have developed in maturity and independence, with a greater understanding of their background, reasons for coming to live at the home, and their wishes and motivations for the future. Young people make good progress because they individually self-regulate risk-taking behaviours, and engage meaningfully with care and support services. Young people have aspirations for their future, and understand what they need to do to achieve their aspirations.

Young people develop a positive self-view, because they are given many opportunities to enjoy different experiences. They feel good about themselves because they have improved behaviour through building self-confidence, enabling them to make changes in their lives and achieve positive outcomes. There is an emphasis on emotional support for young people, and staff's personalised and nurturing approach is age appropriate to young people's development needs. Observations show that young people talk to staff about the concerns they have, as a result young people grow in confidence, feel listened to and valued. Staff are sensitive and understanding when young people talk about their issues, providing opportunities for young people to express their emotions in a safe and appropriate way. This encourages young people to build resilience and confidence, while taking responsibility for the decisions they take in relation to their lives.

Young people are encouraged and supported to engage in a range of learning and education, with young people attending mainstream schools, alternative education provision, and obtaining college placements. Individual young people have opportunities to participate in work experiences in line with their preferences and academic abilities. They have very good school attendance, making positive progress in all areas, including studying towards exams and other accreditations. Some young people have significant histories of poor attendance and engagement at school: the individualised support given raises their aspirations, and ensure young people consistently achieve and attain. Comments from young people included, 'I am doing really well with my education because I want succeed.'

Young people's health needs are being met to ensure good health and well-being. Young people are encouraged to eat healthily and they contribute to menu planning, and meal preparation. Young people regularly access community healthcare services

such as doctors, dentists, and opticians. More specialist healthcare services and professionals are available for those young people whose needs are more long-term, such as those with emotional and psychological concerns. Young people receive encouragement and advice to make individual health choices, and in taking appropriate responsibility for their own well-being, including information on smoking cessation and the benefits of physical exercise.

Young people have good opportunities to explore their individual potential. They learn and grow because they receive support to prepare for independent living. Young people are encouraged to learn the life skills necessary to take more responsibility for their futures. Individual young people have invested considerably in their own learning and development, being well motivated, enabling positive decisions and choices to be made.

Young people benefit from individual contact with those of significance in their lives, with supports in place to maintain these contacts. They are encouraged to be involved within their own communities and to build and sustain friendships and relationships. Young people are more confident and have improved emotional resilience because they are encouraged to take the opportunities to make sense of their backgrounds, experiences and their behaviours. They are engaged in a wide range of activities, with individual opportunities considering identified needs, levels of ability, and linked to their care plans, such activities include animal care and gym membership. This enables young people to explore how they see themselves and others, while developing an increased level of independence and social inclusion.

Quality of care

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

Young people receive a good quality of care in this home from a developing staff team, who are genuinely interested in, and concerned for, their welfare. This service has experienced significant staffing changes during recent months, with staff and young people continuing to build constructive and meaningful relationships. Young people are encouraged to discuss their concerns in an open and transparent way, enabling staff and young people to work together in building a safe and nurturing environment.

Staff speak fondly of young people and are very proud of their achievements across all aspects of their development, particularly in relation to their educational and personal development. The quality of care provided also includes listening to what young people have to say about the care they receive. This is done in a range of ways through residents meetings, one-to-one discussions and throughout day-to-day activities. Staff negotiate and compromise, while encouraging the use of these skills by young people as part of their social development and learning.

Young people are encouraged to make a positive contribution to their care and support needs, attending all reviews and meetings. At these meetings they discuss their wishes and wants for an independent future. There are good arrangements in

place in the home supporting young people to develop a sense of responsibility and appropriate independent living skills. Individual discussion with young people identifies these contributions, with records capturing young people's development, progress, and individual challenges.

Good initial placement planning and assessment identifies young people's individual needs. Staff are well informed about each young person's needs because they have effective partnerships with families and placing social workers. These arrangements help staff to gain important information about young people's backgrounds, family histories, and current needs. Social workers comment on the successful communication links between the home and themselves, and they say that the home positively meets the needs of the young people. Some examples include: young people developing more appropriate relationships with their peers; self-regulating challenging behaviours; and, growing in maturity. However, not all placement plans in the home are up to date, nor do children regularly contribute to them.

Staff are committed to ensuring young people have opportunities to express their individual identity. Young people receive personalised care reflecting their age, gender, and abilities. Where young people have experienced multiple placements, the home provides a settled environment. One social worker stated: 'The home is working very hard in keeping the young person safe, building positive nurturing relationships, and in promoting education, social, and personal life choices.'

The home works effectively with schools and other educational personnel through the positive commitment demonstrated by the services education coordinator. These arrangements are highly effective with local protocols and processes ensuring all young people living in the home receive a comprehensive package of support, initiated in advance of their admission to the home. All young people are supported and encouraged to attend education, and to achieve to the best of their ability. Staff have high expectations of young people and this encourages young people to have high, but realistic aspirations. Staff provide structured support with young people's education including helping with homework. This helps support the impressive educational successes being achieved by the young people at the home.

Young people receive personalised support to maintain contact with family members and to develop social friendships within the community. Leisure activities take place on an individual basis, with young people pursuing activities best suited to their age and care plan. Staff have a good understanding of young people's specific health needs, while encouraging them to take more responsibility for managing these needs. Effective working relationships with health service providers ensure young people's individual needs receive consistent and appropriate support.

The home is located in a rural area. Staff provide transport so that young people are able to participate in a range of purposeful educational and leisure activities in the nearby community. Each young person has their own bedroom and they are encouraged to make them as comfortable and personal as possible. They confirm that staff respect their privacy.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people say they feel safe in the home, and report that staff keep them safe and are concerned with their welfare. Stakeholders comment positively on the safeguarding arrangements in place, and on individual measures to supervise and protect vulnerable young people.

The home has clear practices and protocols with the local police to support effective action when young people go missing. Staff are aware of the factors that may trigger these episodes, and they take appropriate action to minimise such risks. Good partnerships with the local police ensure strategies are in place to respond to all individual incidences, with such strategies seeing a reduction in episodes of missing from care. Young people are safer because they are actively discouraged from accessing risk taking activities and associations, through making positive and safe, lifestyle choices.

The home provides young people with a positive caring experience, which includes supporting, recognising, and rewarding positive behaviours. However, not all behaviour management strategies are sufficiently detailed or restorative. For example, young people's sanctions are not individual to their needs, and records show that levels of financial sanctions are disproportionately high, and largely ineffective. Young people report, that some staff are also inconsistent in maintaining boundaries and house rules, and that some sanctions are applied unnecessarily.

While there are clear processes to assess and identify the particular vulnerabilities relating to the diverse needs of young people, these are not consistently implemented. Not all behaviour action plans and individual risk assessments are current, with the changing circumstances for some young people not sufficiently assessed, and any subsequent support needs accounted for. Physical restraint is rarely used, however records at this visit show that not all incidents have been recorded appropriately, and debriefings with staff and young people are not suitably made. Lack of attention to information and the recording of events can compromise full risk management, and the safety of young people in the home.

An effective recruitment process that includes comprehensive checks on all staff protects young people from harm. All staff are aware of their individual roles and responsibilities, with each shift having a senior member of staff supporting those less experienced, however, not all staff have received safeguarding training in a timely manner.

The home is adequately resourced and managers ensure that health and safety requirements are met, with fire drills taking place at appropriate intervals, and young people and staff know what to do in the event of a fire. Hazardous materials are stored securely, and regularly monitored.

Leadership and management

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

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of this home has been compromised since the last inspection. The home has experienced significant staffing changes in recent months, with some long serving and established staff moving on from the service. The Registered Manager, who is also a director for the company, has been compromised in meeting his joint responsibilities, to both the home and the service. There are on-going changes to the homes management team, with the assistant manager submitting an application to Ofsted for the registered manager's position at the home, and with other staff undertaking promoted roles and responsibilities.

While the provider has made every effort to ensure continuity of staffing during this transitional period, over half the staff have only recently been appointed. The deployment of suitably qualified and experienced staff, both as a group and on an individual basis, has affected the home's ability to meet all day-to-day operational responsibilities. During this time, there have been significant shortfalls in maintaining accurate, consistent, and accountable records in the home. Additionally, this has affected the effective monitoring of day-to-day practices, with patterns and trends not identified and responded to in a timely manner. During this time, managers have worked shifts to support the young people and new staff, and this has affected the efficient management of the home.

Young people's needs are being met by adequate staffing levels. Staff receive formal support and supervision to guide them with the work they do with young people. Day-to-day support from managers and seniors is also available to help staff through the routines of each day, and to ensure continuity of practice. All new staff are completing the Children's Workforce Development Council's induction standards.

Managers have an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the home, and the home has a transitional action plan in place. The plan addresses such shortfalls as safeguarding training for all staff, developments to some of the homes recording and quality assurance systems, and the engagement of a therapist. The homes Statement of Purpose is currently being revised, however shortfalls at this inspection mean further work will be required. Staff training is under review, to ensure all staff are sufficiently knowledgeable in all aspects of the home's policies and procedures, and their implementation in practice.

An external manager to the home currently monitors young people's care on a monthly basis. The visitor's process is comprehensive and includes some consultation with young people and staff. Visitor reports identified some administrative shortfalls, however not all reports include areas for action and improvement, whereby managers can effectively address any on-going issues.

The home ensures that notifications of incidents are made to the appropriate agencies. However, some shortfalls in the monitoring of some complaints, the processes followed, and the outcome of such complaints, require further attention.

Particular attention is required, to ensure that all records in the home are current, accurately recorded, and provide a clear and detailed account of individual young people's lives in the home.

Discussions with the homes management team demonstrate a clear awareness of the improvements required to this service, and in returning the status of the home to one of outstanding. Managers express their determination and commitment to maintaining a sound and transparent approach to initiating and implementing such developments.

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.