

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Wendy Anderson
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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

The home is one of a number of children's services operated by the provider. The home is a six-bedroom detached house in its own grounds. The service was registered in November 2004 as a children's home for four young people with emotional or behavioural problems.

Overall effectiveness

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

This was an unannounced full inspection that has assessed all of the outcome areas as meeting the needs of the young people to a good standard. Young people at the home are positive about the care they receive and the staff who care for them. The home provides young people with a nurturing environment which provides support and enables them to work towards reaching their full potential. There is a strong emphasis on education and positive reinforcement of good behaviour. The staff team continue to be very committed to their work and the young people. The work of the home could be further enhanced by ensuring that staff supervision is consistent and by addressing shortfalls which have been identified through their monitoring processes. The recent recruitment drive will provide the young people with more consistency of staff.

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 staff receive appropriate supervision (Regulation 27 (4) (a))	31/10/2011
25 (2001)	ensure that members of staff placed in charge of the home and other staff have substantial relevant experience of working in the home and have successfully completed their induction and probationary period. (Regulation 25)	31/08/2011

Recommendations

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

- make sure that the written report of the visit carried out under Regulation 33 is responded to and that the any identified shortfall is addressed (NMS 21.8)
- make sure that any shortfalls identified in the Regulation 34 reports are addressed (NMS 21.9)
- ensure that each child's placement plan is signed by the appropriate people. (NMS 25)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

The relationship between the staff and the young people is a major strength of the home. Young people spoke very positively about the staff team who care for them. They said the staff listen to and value their views, are fun to spend time with and look after them well. Staff are very knowledgeable about the young people they work with and are very committed to their work. The young people see the relationship they have with their link worker as very important to their life at the home.

Young people are involved and consulted about the way the home is run and supported to make decisions about their own lives. Residents meeting are held frequently and young people said that they felt these were effective forums for putting forward their views and ideas. Where it has not been possible for an idea/suggestion to be taken forward young people said they have the reasons why explained to them. Young people said they discuss a wide range of things including food, activities, sanctions, bullying and the decoration of the home. However, they also said they did not have to wait for a meeting as lots of discussion takes place over meals and throughout the day.

Young people are supported and encouraged to take part in a wide range of activities both within the home and in the community. Young people said that they are able to put forward ideas for activities and staff will do what they can to provide these. Each young person has three paid activities per week of their choice. There are also a large number of unpaid activities that take place which include art, craft, sport, computer games and cycle rides. Young people also said that the incentive scheme the home runs enables them to access even more activities.

Young people are supported and encouraged in developing skills to prepare them for independence including pathway plans. Several of the young people are involved in independence programmes which include budgeting, menu planning including healthy eating and other practical house hold skills. The programme also now includes how to make appointments, for example, with the doctor, job application and interview skills. Staff apply the same caring approach to young people leaving the home as they do on their admission. Ongoing support is provided by the staff to young people when they leave, with the agreement of any subsequent placement. A number of young people who are now independent still receive support from the staff team.

All young people are supported in maintaining contact with their family and friends. Young people's families are supported by the staff team in attending reviews and other meetings. Friends are welcome at the home. Young people have their own mobile phones but can also use the public phone and the office phone at the home to contact their families.

The home provides young people with a healthy environment where care is taken to arrange routine health appointments and keep records of illnesses, accidents, injuries and medication administered. Staff encourage and support young people to attend medical appointments, including seeing specialists, whilst respecting young people's rights to refuse help and treatment. All refusals are recorded on the individual young person's file. Medication within the home is stored appropriately and there are clear

guidance and policies about the administration of medicines, health promotion and education. All of the young people at the home have consent for the administration of medication and first aid signed by people with parental responsibility for them. Staff take appropriate opportunities with individual young people to talk about health issues, such as the effects of drug or alcohol misuse, relationships, sex and healthy lifestyles.

Food at the home is varied and nutritious. Young people have input to the menus and are involved in shopping for and preparing meals. Young people said they like the food at the home and enjoyed preparing meals with staff. The home is very proactive at encouraging healthy eating and has linked their menus to the National Health Service healthy eating options meal suggestions. This also includes the young people on independence programmes.

Quality of care

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

Young people benefit from receiving individualised support, both by members of staff and from other specialists where required. All young people have a link worker and co-link worker who arrange the help and support that each young person needs. Link workers meet with young people on a weekly basis and minutes are kept of these meetings. These meetings provide an opportunity for a two-way discussion on the issues that brought the young person into care, recent events, any concerns the young person or the home has and future plans. These link workers are selected by the young person and they are very positive about their link workers. They said they found these sessions very helpful. The home also has close working links with a therapy service who will carry out one-to-one work with the young people and they are also involved in the training and development of the staff team.

Young people are aware of and involved in all of the plans concerning their care and time at the home. The home has its own clear and comprehensive plans which along with all the required looked after children's documentation are kept in the individual young person's file and reflect the care the young people are receiving. However, these plans are not signed by the young person or the social worker. The events and activities undertaken by each young person are comprehensively summarised each week including details of achievements, incidents, health, education and any visits from other professionals. This information is presented at formal reviews and then sent to placing social workers. All of young people are having their reviews at the required intervals and attend their review meetings. Young people said that staff help them prepare for their reviews and support them in taking part in the review meeting. Where a young person does refuse to attend their link worker will thoroughly brief them on the review.

Young people know how to make a complaint and said that staff would always take any concerns they had seriously, support them in making a complaint and would take the required action. Information on how to make a complaint is in the current young person's guide which is in the process of being updated with input by the young people. Records of complaints demonstrated that they are dealt with effectively. There have been no complaints since the last inspection. This is in part due to the home's proactive approach to dealing with points raised by the young people.

All of the young people are in full time education, the level of attendance is very high and the young people are making good progress. This is as a result of the strong encouragement and support from the staff team. There are positive links with the education placements of young people which have helped to maintain young people's attendance. This view is supported by those who work in education with the young people placed at the home. This includes staff being present in the classroom where it has been identified this will enable the young person to maintain their attendance and engagement with education. Regular attendance in education is encouraged through the young people's incentives scheme. All of the young people have a current personal education plan. Staff attend parents evenings and other parental events run by the schools/colleges the young people attend. The home also has access to an education advisor who can be involved to mediate and negotiate with education placements on young people's behalf.

The home is a pleasant and homely environment for young people to live in which is furnished to a good standard. Maintenance of the property is carried out quickly to maintain this standard and there is a rolling programme in place for re-decoration and replacement of furniture. Young people are encouraged to personalise their bedrooms and are also involved in the choice of décor. Both of the bathrooms have been refurbished to an excellent standard. Externally there is a spacious garden which allows the young people to play football and other sport. There is also a vegetable patch which the young people tend. The home has just introduced pet goldfish at the young people's request. The staff and the provider are committed to providing a nurturing environment which enables the young people to develop and grow. The home has an appropriate risk assessment in place to ensure young people live in a safe environment.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people are protected and safe at the home. The staff are trained in and are knowledgeable about safeguarding procedures including arrangements of the Local Safeguarding Children Board. The manager knows when to report or seek advice from professionals outside the home. There have not been any child protection incidents since the last inspection.

Staff at the home are alert to the possibility of bullying between the young people; know what signs to look for and how to respond if it is reported. Young people know that they can report bullying to staff or at their house meeting and that staff will take action to deal with it quickly. Young people said that bullying was not an issue at the home. The home's policies and procedures provide clear guidance for staff on bullying. This includes information on cyber bullying via the internet or mobile phones.

Young people's privacy at the home is respected by staff as they ensure that information about young people is securely stored. Staff also knock on young people's doors and wait to be invited into their bedrooms. There is an appropriate room search policy in place and wherever possible room searches are carried out in the presence of the young person. Where a young person is not present they are informed. Room searches are carried out by two staff and these searches are appropriately recorded. None have been carried out since the last inspection.

There are clear procedures in place for young people who are absent without authority which are linked to young people's individual risk assessments and behaviour plans. These have been recently reviewed and updated to reflect the new protocols for working with young people who go missing. Records kept of these incidents are clear and include information on debrief sessions held with young people upon their return. Since the last inspection there have been five incidents of a young person going missing. These were all the same young person. The home has developed a good working relationship with the police which includes, where appropriate, young people being 'flagged' due to their vulnerability should they go missing to ensure a robust response.

The main focus of the home's behaviour management approach is the reinforcement of positive behaviours. Each young person has goals to achieve daily for which they receive a financial reward. Young people also earn points towards more significant rewards by their positive behaviour. The reward and timescale for this is set by the young person with their link worker. Young people said that sanctions and reparations used are fair and they have been involved in the development of these. The home has an appropriate policy on sanctions; however, there are some gaps in the recording of the effectiveness of the sanction. The home has an appropriate policy and procedure for the use of restraint which the records reflect. There have been three incidents of restraint since the last inspection which have all been appropriate. Staff receive regular update training on restraint and behaviour management.

The home has an excellent selection and recruitment procedure which is rigorously adhered to and protects young people. A human resources specialist is responsible

for undertaking recruitment checks for all new staff to the organisation. Wherever possible young people are involved in the interview process for new staff, but it is the young people's choice as to whether they are involved in this process.

Young people know what they should do in the event of a fire at the home. Records confirm that the alarm systems are tested regularly and other procedures are in place to ensure maintenance of equipment and installations. Risk assessments are used to identify and reduce risks from hazards around the building, grounds and activities by young people. These are reviewed and updated regularly.

Leadership and management

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

Young people live in a home which is well managed and resourced with some minor shortfalls. At the last inspection two requirements were made but only one of these has been addressed, this was the need for a night time fire drill. The other requirement concerned staff supervision, although there has been significant improvement in this area, this is not consistent. The staff who are supervisors have received appropriate training. Staff said that they feel extremely well supported by the manager who they said had a real open door policy and would always make time for them. The home's annual appraisal, which incorporates a personal development plan has been updated and is currently being rolled out to all staff. Staff meetings are held at the required intervals and minutes are taken.

The home has an appropriate Statement of Purpose. This information is readily available and gives an accurate reflection of how the home is run. Young people are given a handbook about the home when they arrive. This is currently being reviewed and updated with the young people's involvement.

There are systems in place to monitor the performance of the home, including a quality assurance process where placing social workers are invited to complete a questionnaire about the service. The Regulation 33 visits happen as required with the majority of these being unannounced. These reports are very detailed and include actions to be taken. There was evidence of actions not being consistently addressed. The manager completes an appropriate Regulation 34 monthly monitoring report but again there are some minor gaps in any identified shortfall being addressed.

Young people receive care from a competent, committed staff team and there are clear on call arrangements. Due to the home having just completed their recruitment process currently there are only 70% of staff who have gained a National Vocational Qualification at level 3 or above. However, the remaining staff are being enrolled on this course. The home places an emphasis on staff training. Staff spoken to supported this view. Their training programme covers all the required topics with a number of courses being regularly updated. The home has a comprehensive 12 week induction programme for all new staff. The home's bank staff are included in all staff training. Specific training linked to the needs of young people is also available.

The staff rota demonstrates that there is a staff ratio of one-to-one with the young people. This has recently been restructured to provide better continuity of care for the young people. There are scheduled times for supervision, staff meetings and staff handovers. The home has used a significant number of bank staff hours to cover the rota during staff shortages. These bank staff are employed by the company and assigned to specific homes. There has also been some limited use of agency staff. There was one occasion where a newly appointed member of staff, very early in their appointment and who had not completed their probationary period, carried out a sleep-in duty with an agency member of staff. This is not good practice. As stated before the recent recruitment of new staff has reduced the use of both agency and bank staff to a minimum.

Young people's files are securely stored and contain all the required information; however, some documents have not been signed by the relevant people. Young

people have their needs, development and progress clearly recorded whilst they are staying at the home. They are able to read what is written about them as well as adding their own comments if they wish. Records kept of young people's clothing, personal requisites and pocket monies are comprehensive providing evidence of running totals of deposits, withdrawals and balances.

The home has a clear policy on the reporting of significant events to the appropriate organisations and these are made within 24 hours of the event.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. This is evident throughout all of the home's policies, procedures and practice.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.