

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC062013
Inspection date	15/05/2011
Inspector	Stephen Trainor
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	05/01/2011
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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 operates this children's home. It is registered to care for up to three young people of both genders, from the age of 10 to 17 years-old. The home cares for young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Overall effectiveness

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

Overall the home is managed well and young people receive a good standard of care that enable them to develop their potential. Individuals are clear on their arrangements in place, are aware of plans and programmes, and make good progress both socially and educationally. Relationships between staff and the young people are good and young people usually provide good cooperation. Suitable action, utilising a multi-disciplinary approach, is taken when young people's behaviour is unsuitable and this includes working with police to safeguard children missing from care. At the time of inspection, an established missing from care protocol was under review by local police and this created some uncertainties about the time young people need to be reported as missing. Young people did state that they feel safe whilst living at the home.

The home's environment is generally supportive and underpinned by defined boundaries. Young people usually choose to lead stable lifestyles. On occasions staff have been less vigilant and individual young people's welfare has not been fully promoted. Young people are cared for by an experienced and motivated staff team. Good continuity with staffing is evident and there was little impact on practice following some recent changes to the staff team. The manager clearly understands the home's strengths and areas for future improvement; however, the home's development plan is still to be produced. Some statutory records are not readily available to enable staff to fully support transitional arrangements and the views of some partner agencies have not been captured to support the development of the provision for young people. Some training is needed to ensure staff are fully up to date with professional and legal developments following extensive changes to inspection frameworks.

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
11 (2001)	ensure that the children's home is conducted so as to make proper provision for the supervision of children accommodated enabling welfare to be promoted at all times. (Regulation 11 (1) (b))	24/06/2011

Recommendations

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

- ensure the home's missing from care procedures are compatible with and have regard to Runaway and Missing from Home and Care (RMFHC) protocols and procedures maintained and managed by police for the area where the home is located (NMS 5.6)
- ensure staff know their role in implementing the local authority and home's policy on runaway and missing from care (NMS 5.2)
- ensure all staff's work is consistent with new regulations, new national minimum standards and the available guidance (NMS 21.3)
- ensure the registered person takes action to address any issues of concern that they identify or which is raised with them, specifically, continue implementing mediation measures within the local community (NMS 21.9)
- ensure the views of independent reviewing officers are sought regularly (NMS 1.4)
- produce a home's development plan (NMS 15.2)
- ensure the registered person works with the responsible authority to ensure effective sharing of information, in particular, records of all statutory reviews. (22.7, 25.8)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people present at the time of the inspection were experiencing stable placements and progress was being made on many levels including developing independence skills, education attendance and improved family contact. It is possible to chart progress for each young person by reviewing planning documents, risk assessments, general records and by the positive feedback provided by the young people themselves. They are supported by staff and other professionals to achieve personal goals and this helps them to develop a better understanding and appreciation of their personal circumstances.

The young people are treated fairly, with practice capable of supporting individuals living there. Young people benefit from regular contact with their families. Staff have a good understanding of family histories and this helps to maintain relationships between young people and their families. Risks are carefully managed and there is good work between the home's staff and field social work staff to deliver consistent messages to residents and family members. Some joint working and family support goes above and beyond the normal call of duty. A unique resource to the home is a holiday caravan that has been used successfully to re-establish family contact and help build relationships.

The educational outcomes for young people are good. Encouragingly, the young people are engaging with their education programmes and an education programme is being set up for a young person who has recently moved in. Attendance at college is satisfactory. Young people's achievements in sitting examinations help to improve confidence and future prospects.

Young people usually choose to follow a healthy lifestyle and they understand the importance of taking responsibility for their health and well-being. They confirm that they are familiar with their health arrangements and are aware of the contents of their health plans. There is input from specialist health services. Routine medical, optical and dental appointments are organised. Good relationships are established with the looked after children nurse. Statutory medical examinations are organised. Staff reassure young people if they have concerns about treatments. There is consideration for young people to look after their own medication. Competency-based assessments are carried out, and this affords opportunities for the young people to develop self-management and independence skills. Medication is stored safely, and records are maintained on the administration of medication, including, prescribed and non-prescribed medication. All staff receive suitable training to support health and well-being and this improves the quality of care being provided to the young people.

Young people's pathway plans are generally implemented very well and placement experiences provided by staff at the home allow young people to gain life skills to support them into adulthood. The quality of experience provided in-house means young people gain many competencies suited to their preparation for independence.

Quality of care

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

Staff are skilled in engaging young people positively and this means they usually choose to lead safe lives. A supportive environment allows good relationships to be formed between staff and the young people. The young people commented that they value staff's support. Good planning reinforces more socially acceptable behaviour and the impact of this can be seen in less offending and challenging behaviour and improved school attendance. Staff report problems and concerns transparently when they arise.

Young people benefit from individualised planning. Their plans remain live and subject to frequent review through statutory procedures and these provide clear information on progress being made. Young people's efforts are rewarded and incentives are helping to change their behaviours. There is good emphasis on gaining important life skills. Pathway plans are introduced at the correct stage allowing young people to build a wide range of independence skills that are suited for the wider world of work and adult life. However a statutory review record was missing and this meant the collaborative response required from social worker and personal advisor in supporting transitional arrangements was not as clear as it should have been. The promotion of young people's education, health and well-being and the management of contact are good.

Equality and diversity is established within the culture and ethos of the home and practice is clearly underpinned by fairness. Young people have opportunities to develop, self-knowledge, self-help skills and gain self-esteem from the quality of care being provided. Individual's identity and mental health is helped by specialist agencies when required.

Young people express their opinions and feedback is welcomed; this makes a clear contribution to the development of services at the home. Good communication and consultation usually results in young people selecting to take responsibility for their behaviour and become immersed in life at the home. There is a growing body of evidence from a wide range of professionals, agencies and parents to show partnership arrangements are working. A social worker commented that she is 'kept informed about events and clear lines of communication had been established'. Ongoing mediation with local police and neighbours takes place to resolve local community matters. The responsible individual for the organisation is fully committed to establishing good relationships with the wider community.

Continuous learning and development opportunities are being presented and the responsible organisation has its own registered school to support local education arrangements and specialist college placements. Equality of opportunity is valued highly by the home's registered manager and developing educational potential forms a clear part of the home's philosophy of care. School and college attendance continues to improve.

Young people understand how to make a complaint. A guide covers complaints with information, guidance and contact details of agencies such as Ofsted. The contact details of the Children's Rights Director are also provided. However information on Independent Reviewing Officers is not included to fully extend their role in the

monitoring and evaluation of young people's progress . The young people can differentiate between grumbles and serious complaints. Staff promote discussion to sort out minor matters between young people.

Staff promote healthy lifestyles and they deliver health promotion work covering matters, such as sexual relationships, smoking cessation, drug misuse and healthy living. There are collaborative links with many different professionals and agencies and this allows helpful guidance and support to be provided when young people are most in need. Young people are encouraged to attend appointments and to take responsibility for their good health.

Staff engage young people in activities to develop individual potential. Individual interests are identified and there is a suitable budget provided that enables young people to pursue their hobbies. Holidays are planned for. The responsible organisation has holiday caravan. Achieving the correct balance between organised activities and young people's free time is central to staff practice. Hazards and risks associated with recreation and activities is identified and managed. Recreation is linked to developing healthy lifestyles. There are some opportunities for young people to get involved in the wider community and this helps them prepare for the wider world of work.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people confirm that they are safe and happy living at the home. They learn to accept responsibility for their behaviour, show initiative and understand how they contribute to the home's operation. They develop skills that enable them to differentiate their behaviour according to the different settings and situations they find themselves in. Young people's personalities prosper and sound progress is made. All have a strong sense of safety and well-being. On the majority of occasions they select to lead safe lives. Staff continuously deliver safety messages through personal, social and health education.

Young people say that bullying is not an issue of concern to them and confirm that staff do not tolerate any form of bullying. They have confidence that staff will respond to any bullying that could occur. A range of anti-bullying information is available.

Suitable safeguarding and complaints information is provided for young people. They are aware of the content of this information and acknowledge that they will not suffer any recrimination if complaints and grumbles are made. Staff receive regular training to update their knowledge and have a good understanding of safeguarding policies, procedures and actions they should take, if an incident arises. Policy and procedural guidance has been established that is consistent with local safeguarding team protocols. Complaints are responded to and significant events are reported transparently, allowing external scrutiny of the home's management and staff practice. In general, incidents and complaints between inspections had been managed well. A recent event, linked to poor staff supervision, resulted in some safeguarding concerns. The responsible organisation took appropriate steps to address concerns and action taken means young people remain safe in their placements.

Systems for dealing with young people who go missing from the home are under review. Work is taking place to ensure procedures are compatible with and have regard to runaway and missing from home and care protocols maintained and managed by police for the area where the home is located. A more proportionate response, utilising risk assessments, will be a key change to practice. Police records and the home's records on children that go missing show no major concerns relating to the volume of incidents being reported. The home tends to report matters immediately. Practice dictated by a revised protocol has the potential to reduce reports significantly. The home has an excellent working relationship with the missing from care police coordinator, local police and support officers. However records maintained at the home do not provide good detail on return to home interviews. The young people do confirm that staff talk to them when they return and they reflect on the dangers and risks when leaving the home without permission.

Staff uphold children's rights as well as providing daily support to achieve and develop. Respectful communication was observed throughout the inspection between young people, staff, and Ofsted inspectors. A good atmosphere was maintained throughout the visit. Young people respond well to praise. The registered manager is working to reduce the number of sanctions being given. Records of sanctions and rewards are maintained.

Physical intervention is a rare occurrence, with only three incidents taking place since the previous inspection. Staff are clear that it is very much a last resort and are more comfortable using the positive relationships built up with young people to diffuse difficult situations. All staff receive regular and refresher training in positive handling techniques.

Young people benefit from a fairly stable staff team. Appropriate recruitment policies and procedures are in place and personnel files are well organised. Files are maintained at the responsible organisation headquarters and are couriered to the home for inspections. Information confirmed that no staff start work prior to being in receipt of an enhanced Criminal Records Bureau check. A suitable checking system is evident throughout the recruitment process. Vetting of visitors to the home is undertaken with identity checks being carried out before access is permitted.

Health and safety at the home is managed well ensuring staff and young people remain safe. Certification is held centrally and this shows regular servicing of gas and electrical installations. Portable appliance testing is routinely undertaken. A fire risk assessment of the premises is available. Young people know what to do in the case of an emergency. A range of risk assessments have been produced to support practice and help with hazard identification.

Leadership and management

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

This service is managed by an experienced and fully qualified manager who is confident leading the staff team working at the home. A strong child-focused service is provided. There is a clear vision on how the home should operate. The responsible organisation states that it offers a high level of commitment to young people. After agreeing a placement the organisation takes its responsibility to see work through seriously. One social worker commented, 'They don't give up easily'.

The manager is perceptive in identifying the home's strengths and the areas where it could perform better. An accurate verbal self-assessment of the service was provided and this will help to support further developments. Some specific areas of work, including, new framework training and improving staff knowledge and skills sets around new national minimum standards, is identified and a training programme is being developed. This will help the team to keep up to date with professional and legal developments. A home's development plan is still to be produced.

Records at this home show good clarity in how staff are managed. Induction and foundation training is provided. Detailed training attendance records are maintained. Staff confirm that supervision is taking place. There is access to National Vocational Qualification training and a good percentage of staff hold relevant qualifications. New staff have access to new diploma training. A new training provider was recently appointed. Personal development plans are linked to the staff annual appraisals. There is efficient team work and communication and a proactive response is taken when staffing issues arise. Rota's demonstrate that staffing levels are maintained.

Internal and external monitoring of the home's operation and practice is coordinated with monthly reports being completed for both Regulation 33 and 34 visits. Young people contribute to these visits with their comments providing a snap shot in time on what it is like to live at the home.

Service history shows practice has been scrutinised through inspection and complaints investigation activity. The home maintains a good record in compliance and suitable practice standards are being delivered. No recommendations were made at the last inspection and the service was given a good overall judgement against the Every Child Matters framework. The home responded positively to some requirements set as a result of a complaint investigation. Improvements to recording systems were made.

Staff have written guidance, policies and procedures to support their practice. The home's Statement of Purpose provides information in accordance with regulations. Aims and objectives, as well as the philosophy of care are outlined. Staff use guidance to ensure a consistent response to meeting young people's presenting needs. The organisation policies and procedures are being reviewed in line with new guidance, regulations and standards. The ethos and working practices of the home meets aims and objectives and this means young people acquire an appreciation of and respect for their personal circumstances.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.