

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Chris Scully
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home offers care and accommodation for up to four young people, between the ages of 10 and 17-years-old with emotional or behavioural difficulties. The home is one of several owned by a private company.

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 live in a safe, caring and supportive home environment that has enabled them to make good progress since they first moved in. They feel safe and are protected from harm. Clear procedures are in place with regards to safeguarding and missing from care. Consequently, staff are able to take swift action should they have any concerns about a young person. Staff have a clear understanding of each young person's vulnerabilities. However, the missing from care risk assessments are not sufficiently detailed.

Young people enjoy very positive relationships with staff. They say 'staff are great' and they are confident to request specific staff to accompany them on trips. Young people are positive about the quality of care and the support they receive from the staff. Care planning is good. All aspects of this are personalised and reflect young people's individuality. However, the systems for administration and recording of medication are not sufficiently robust. This may impact upon the health of young people. Young people make good progress in all aspects of their lives. This is because staff are very aware of their diverse needs and work well with social workers to ensure these needs are met well in practice. Social workers are complimentary about the care provided. They comment upon the progress young people have made, in particular the reduction in risk taking behaviours.

The home recently appointed a new manager. The manager has applied to Ofsted to become the Registered Manager. The manager is aware of the home's strengths and areas for improvement and has instigated a number of changes with regards to record keeping. The home is generally appropriately staffed. Although, young people

say on some occasions activities have needed to be changed as staff were not available to take them. Other records and documentation are generally well maintained, although there are shortfalls with regards to some risk assessments and health care plans. The Statement of Purpose does not reflect the current management arrangements, however, social workers are aware of the changes.

Young people's views are central to care practice. Young people feel valued and respected as staff listen to them and are 'always there' for them. This is supported by the very positive relationships young people have with staff, which are built upon honesty and trust. Young people are very aware of the complaints procedure and others outside of the home who they can talk to.

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
21 (2001)	ensure there are suitable arrangements for the recording, safekeeping, safe administration and disposal of any medicines received into the children's home (Regulation 21 (1))	03/08/2012
5 (2001)	keep under review and, where appropriate revise the Statement of Purpose and notify Ofsted of any such revision within 28 days. (Regulation 5 (a)(b))	03/08/2012

Recommendations

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

- ensure the care and support provided to young people minimises the risk that they will go missing in particular, the missing from care risk assessments are sufficiently detailed (NMS 5.1)
- ensure young people's health is promoted in accordance with their placement plan in particular they have an up-to-date health care plan (NMS 6.5)
- ensure there is a system in place to monitor the quality, adequacy and consistency of record keeping in particular young people's risk assessments (NMS 22.1)
- ensure the deployment of staff meets the needs of young people resident with particular regards to leisure activities and special events. ((NMS 17.1)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people make good progress and are achieving positive outcomes in all aspects of their lives. They show signs of a more positive self-image and take pride in their appearance and achievements. They are growing in confidence, maturity, emotional resilience, and are developing good social and communication skills. They have a number of friends and have an enjoyable social life. They are more able to communicate their feelings appropriately. They take on board other people's wishes and feelings, talk through problems with staff and accept advice and guidance. As a result they are developing good problem-solving skills. They regularly take part in charity events, such as walks and donating clothes to charities. Consequently, young people develop insight into the need of others and are more able to consider their own situations in a more positive light.

Young people are generally healthy and enjoy healthy lifestyles. They take more responsibility for their own personal care and are confident to ask staff to arrange health appointments. They have good access to a full range of health services. As a result they are very aware of their own health care needs and how they can improve this. A number of young people are extremely proud that they have managed to give up smoking, but acknowledge this is not easy. They receive very good support and guidance about a full range of social and health issues. Consequently, young people have a clear understanding about healthy lifestyles and make informed choices about their health.

Young people enjoy a range of healthy and nutritious meals and snacks, which fully encompass their cultural and religious needs. They are keen to explain how they are embracing a wider range of foods, but still prefer rice and pasta to potatoes. Young people enjoy the opportunities to cook for themselves and others, and continue to show high levels of skill when preparing meals. Young people relish the opportunities to plan their own meals. They are keen to explain the importance of eating plenty of vegetables and fruit especially bananas. Others say, 'we plan meals with the staff, this means everyone has a say and we all enjoy the food.' Young people are taking a bigger responsibility for their health and well-being. This is because they regularly go to the gym and engage in other sporting activities such as swimming.

Young people's attendance at school is good. For some young people there is a significant increase in their attendance since residing at the home. Young people say they are doing well at school and are proud of their achievements. They are eager to show their many awards to visitors. They are looking forward to September when they begin new courses in hospitality and join sixth form colleges. Some young people have clear career goals in mind, such as becoming a marine biologist and are considering what they need to do to achieve this. Social workers say, 'young people enjoy school and are proud of their achievements, which are fully celebrated within the home.' Young people are extremely pleased to have attended their school prom and talk excitedly about other events they have taken part in at school.

Young people benefit from appropriate and well-managed contact with their family and other important people in their lives. This enables them to maintain and develop positive relationships. Staff work really hard to ensure that young people find seeing their families to be a safe, positive and enjoyable experience. Staff are very aware that young people sometimes may find seeing their family stressful, and make sure they are suitably and sensitively supported.

Young people are being well-prepared to become more independent and make a successful transition into adult life appropriate to their age and level of understanding. They are extremely pleased that they are able to travel to and from school on their own next term. They have already planned their route to ensure they arrive in plenty of time. Young people relish the opportunities to test their new found independence and responsibility and are mindful that this is built upon trust and their increased maturity. They are capable and have regular opportunities to build confidence in their life skills. They are routinely involved in the running of the house, shopping, tidying, and helping with the laundry and using money. Staff actively encourage and support young people to be more independent and take suitable responsibility for their lives.

Quality of care

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

Young people are thriving living in a warm and supportive environment. Staff provide them with good standards of care, structure and routine. Staff always see young people in a positive and realistic light. They have high aspirations for them and are proud of how well they are doing. They are fully committed to enabling young people to overcome the difficulties they may face to lead happy and fulfilling lives. Young people say, 'the staff are brilliant! They are always there for us,' and acknowledge that they are not always the easiest person to deal with. Social workers are pleased with the levels of support offered to young people. They say, 'young people are really happy here, and are confident to talk to staff.' Others say, 'this is probably the best placement we have had for the young person.'

Young people feel valued and respected as individuals. This is because staff listen to their wishes, concerns and complaints. These are always taken them seriously and staff make sure they are dealt with promptly. Young people are very confident to raise issues with the registered individual and service manager. This includes requesting pool tables and new televisions for their bedroom. Young people and staff work well together to resolve any problems. For example, deciding who is responsible for specific chores around the home and why some are deemed unfair for some young people. As a result young people are developing empathy and excellent negotiation skills.

Young people are fully involved in the decisions affecting their lives and planning for their future. For example, young people attend meetings about their future and have their views taken into account. Young people are confident to talk to the staff and know that they will assist them in resolving any issues or worries. Staff actively seek

young people's views about the running of the home; for example, choosing what they do in their spare time and the home's holiday. Staff help young people understand why it may not be possible always to act upon their wishes, for example, changing their medication. Young people say, 'staff are cool, they always listen to us, even if we can't have what we want they say why.'

Staff always place the well-being of individual young people at the centre of their practice. They have a very good understanding of each young person and ensure they receive good individual support and guidance. Care planning is good and is tailored to the specific needs of each young person. The home is committed to valuing, supporting and respecting the diverse cultural and religious needs of young people. This is strength of the setting.

Staff put young people's plans into practice effectively to ensure young people's specific needs are met on a day-to-day basis. This means young people are recognised as individuals with different needs, backgrounds, interests and views Staff actively contribute to the planning of young people's care by providing detailed information about young people's experiences and progress. They work effectively with social workers to ensure that the placement is suitable to meet young people's needs. Social workers are complimentary about the staff and the 'very good communication' between them, the social worker and family. Ultimately, young people receive an individual service designed to meet their diverse personal needs.

Young people live in a healthy environment that actively promotes their health and well-being. Excellent relationships with children and adolescent mental health services and the home psychologist mean young people receive good care and support. Staff are very aware of young people's health care needs and how these are being supported. This has led to a significant decline in risk taking behaviour for some young people. However, this is not always fully documented within their health care plans. As a result, some information is not sufficiently detailed with regards to using recreational drugs, alcohol and young people's past histories. This impacts upon the consistency in the recording systems. Systems for the administration of medication are appropriate. However, on some occasions the medication record does not reflect the actual dosage to be given. On a small number of occasions a young person was not given the prescribed dosage of over the counter pain relief medication. While this was not the amount to be given, it did not exceed the recommended amount.

Young people are making good progress with their education. Staff have high aspirations for young people and actively celebrate their achievements, such as gaining qualification or being pupil of the week. Young people say staff always make sure they are up on time for school. Staff work very well with schools to consistently promote young people's educational progress. Staff use innovative ways to engage young people with their learning in a fun way. This includes, setting mini projects to establish the costing and timetable for trips. Young people routinely take part in enjoyable leisure activities, at home and in the community that enable them to follow individual interests and hobbies. This means they are able to meet their friends, going to the cinema, cadets, singing and dance classes. Young people are looking

forward to their holiday and are eagerly planning their activities.

Young people live in a comfortable family home situated in a rural setting close to public transport links. The home is warm, welcoming and truly reflects the personalities and style of the young people living there. The home is well maintained and has the support of a handy person for maintenance work. Young people's bedrooms reflect their individuality and tastes. Young people say 'this is our home and we have a say in how it looks.' Young people say they enjoy the opportunities to relax in the grounds. They take pleasure in spending time with their friends in the new 'swimming pool', playing sports and having barbeques.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people live in a safe environment where they are effectively protected from harm and have a sense of safety. They say that they feel safe at the home. Young people are protected as staff have a secure understanding of the home's safeguarding procedures. This means they are able to take swift action should they have any concerns in relation to a young person's welfare or well-being. Staff give young people's safety the highest priority and are trained in relation to safeguarding. Young people are provided with good advice on how to keep themselves safe. They are encouraged to talk to them if they have any worries or concerns. Staff's secure understanding of each young person's needs enables them to act in their best interests.

Young people rarely go missing and if they do they return quickly. This is confirmed by police liaison officers who report the incidents of young people being missing are very low. Social worker's confirm that there has been a significant decrease in the number of times young people go missing since residing at the home. On the rare occasion that this occurs young people are provided with very good support from staff. This means they get the right help and support to help them address any issues following this. Young people are getting better at keeping in contact with staff by mobile telephone when they are away from the home. They generally come in on time and respond positively to staff's reminders to be in for set times. Staff are very aware of their vulnerabilities and the risks they face when out in the community. However, this information is not sufficiently detailed within their missing from care risk assessments. This impacts upon the consistency and accuracy of the information. The home works well with placing authorities, police and family to try and locate the young people.

Young people's behaviour is generally very good. They know what standards of behaviour are expected and possible consequences of poor behaviour. Staff are positive role models who are very good at encouraging positive behaviour by offering high levels of praise and encouragement. Consequently, young people are able to consider their own behaviours resulting in a decline of inappropriate behaviour. Young people are aware that sanctions may be imposed. Physical restraints are very rarely used. Young people say sanctions are fair and they understand the reason why

they were given. The manager monitors these to ensure consistency and fairness and will in consultation with young people and staff and make amendments if appropriate.

Young people live in a physically safe environment. They are protected from any hazards by a comprehensive range of health and safety procedures, risk assessments and checks. Staff carry out regular health and safety checks to ensure the premises are safe and young people know what to do in case of an emergency. The recruitment and selection of people working at the home is thorough to make sure young people are protected. The provider carefully ensures that staff have the skills and competencies to meet the needs of individual young people. The vetting of visitors to the home is robust and ensures the safety and well-being of young people.

Leadership and management

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

The home has recently appointed a new manager. The manager has submitted their application to Ofsted to become a Registered Manager. There have also been some changes to the staff within the home. This has resulted in some managerial changes, such as the organisation of files. These changes are still being embedded with staff.

The Statement of Purpose generally provides a clear picture of the care and support provided to young people. This was updated earlier in the year, but has not been subsequently revised to reflect the current management position of the home or information regarding staffing. However, placing authorities are aware of the new management structure and young people's key workers. This does not directly impact upon the care provided to young people. Young people are very well informed about their rights and the support provided. This is achieved through direct discussion with young people and the detailed, fun young people's guide which is provided to them. Consequently, they have detailed information to hand. This means they know who to contact with any concerns, such as the Children's Rights Director and have information relating to activities and clubs in the local community.

Young people are cared for by a team of staff who have a range of skills and experience. This enables staff to provide good support to the young people. The staff team reflects young people's cultural backgrounds and provides both positive male and female role models. All staff hold a recognised qualification or are working towards one. A training development plan is in place which outlines when refresher training, such as safeguarding and positive intervention is required. Overall, this helps maintain staff knowledge and skills so they can meet the needs of young people.

There have been some changes to the numbers of staff on shift. However, this has resulted, on a small number of occasions, in changes to planned leisure activities as staff were not available. One young people person said they were upset that staff did not attend a school production, but has been reassured that there will be a strong staff presence for the next one. This was identified by the manager and independent

person and is currently being reviewed to prevent a recurrence. However, there are appropriate systems to call in staff to cover for unexpected events to ensure young people are fully supported.

The manager has addressed most of the recommendations from the last inspection. Some progress has been made with regards to the missing from care records; however, they require further revision to ensure they are sufficiently detailed. Detailed Regulation 34 reports are now sent to Ofsted at six monthly intervals. The home ensures reviews are initiated no more than 72 hours after an emergency admission. This ensures all information is in place and that the placement is appropriate for the young person.

Staff say that the manager is available should they need support or guidance. All staff receive regular supervision. In addition, they attend monthly team meetings. This allows staff to discuss the running of the home and to look at ways in which to further enhance the service that they offer, reflect upon young people's progress and how best to support them. The home's written records are held securely in the office. They generally provide a comprehensive picture of the young people's experiences, needs, development and progress. Although on a small number of occasions the information held is not always clear, for example, young people's risk assessments hold conflicting information. This does not promote consistency for young people.

The home has sound systems to review the quality of care each month. The Registered Manager consistently monitors the running of the home and identifies areas for improvement. Action is taken to ensure the home meets young people's needs and promotes their welfare. A representative of the organisation visits each month to monitor how well young people are being cared for. The manager in conjunction with the service manager is in the process of revising the home's development plan. This outlines what the homes does well and areas for future development.

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.