

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC063683
Inspection date	26/07/2011
Inspector	Alicea Churchward
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	26/11/2010
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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 offers accommodation to six young people. The building is designed in a way that offers plenty of space to the young people, including a large lawn garden area to the rear of the building.

Overall effectiveness

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

Overall the home provides a satisfactory standard of care with some good outcomes for individual young people. Some young people have achieved placement stability.

Young people's views of the home and the quality of the care they receive are variable and prior to this inspection they had a disruptive night. Some young people feel there are times when they feel unsafe; this has been addressed by placing social workers on a regular basis. One social worker reports the 'this is the best place for this young person'. They report that any issues raised by young people are discussed with the staff in the home and these matters are being dealt with appropriately. The manager of the home generally manages these issues well in risk assessments.

The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory; staff have undertaken training in these matters and assist young people with their individual identity and interests. However, local resources to meet diverse needs are not known.

Young people say that the rules can be inconsistent and raise concerns about institutionalised practice that they have not previously raised in the form of complaints. These issues have been raised with the manager who agrees to take appropriate action to address matters. Social workers have observed some good relationships between staff and young people and parents report favourably about the home one says 'the staff are very good in what they do ... there is nothing they could do better everything is good ... the way it is run'.

Young people generally report having 'alright' relationships with most of the staff on the whole and can identify staff members they can speak to about concerns. The breaches in regulation found at the time of this inspection are having an impact upon young people's daily living experience. Young people have access to children's rights and their placing social workers, they are given the opportunity to make complaints but do not always use this process.

Areas for improvement identified during this inspection include updating the Statement of Purpose regarding policy and procedure for emergency admissions. Obtaining consents from placing social workers if restrictions are placed upon the use

of the telephone and ensuring young people's access to a telephone. Also making sure that Regulation 33 visits and Regulation 34 monitoring clearly include the views of young people. That young people's views about restraint must be included in the dedicated records of restraints. Also that young people get a timely response to any complaints they have made and furthermore that all staff files contain the required information.

In addition recommendations have been made regarding updating the children's guide. That individual risk assessments of known behaviours contain all known risks. With regard to introduction to the children's home consideration is given to emergency admissions. To improve the quality and standards of care further, that children live in a homely environment that allows for access to areas of the home and obtaining information about the local area so that diverse cultural needs can be met if young people placed wish to pursue them. Also ensuring the views and wishes of young people are taken into account in respect of the internal monitoring of the home.

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
15 (2001)	staff establish that consent is obtained from placing social workers about any restrictions placed upon access to young people's personal mobile telephone (Regulation 15 (7)(a))	30/09/2011
4 (2001)	ensure that the Statement of Purpose includes criteria used for admission to the home, including the home's policy and procedures for emergency admissions (Regulation 4 and Schedule 1 (9))	30/09/2011
33 (2001)	ensure that Regulation 33 visits are conducted at regular intervals and make specific reference as to whether young people and staff are given the opportunity to meet with the visitor in private (Regulation 33 (4)(a))	30/09/2011
34 (2001)	ensure that children are consulted in the Regulation 34 monitoring of the home and action is taken to improve the quality of care (Regulation 34 (3))	30/09/2011
17B (2001)	make sure young people are given an opportunity to record their views about restraints on records made by staff and that all records contain the duration of any restraint (Regulation 17B (4)(a))	30/09/2011
15 (2001)	ensure that young people are provided at all reasonable times with access to facilities which they may use without reference to persons working in the home, a telephone on which to make and receive telephone calls in private (Regulation (15)(4)(a))	30/09/2011

Recommendations

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

- ensure that the updated Statement of Purpose known as the parents guide is made available to all parents so that they are clear about; complaints, restraint and reviews (NMS 13.1)
- make arrangements so that the views and wishes of young people are taken into account about the daily life of the home (Volume 5, statutory guidance (2.24))
- ensure that visits to the home carried out under Regulation 33 include relevant checks set out in regulations and guidance and checks of any disciplinary measures and use of restraint (NMS 21.7)
- ensure that individual risk assessments include all details of known behaviours and the actions that staff must take to address them; in this case self harm (NMS 4.5)
- ensure that the children's guide includes how a child can contact their Independent Reviewing Officer, the Children's Rights Director and Ofsted if they wish to raise a concern with inspectors (NMS 13.5)
- ensure that the children are able to live in a homely environment, that allows a certain degree of freedom and where the rules regarding a safe environment are implemented sensibly; in respect of the locking of communal areas such as the kitchen, and young people's bedrooms (Volume 5 statutory guidance 2.63)
- ensure that children receive prompt feedback on any concerns or complaints raised and are kept informed of progress (NMS 1.6)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

There are very good records of work being undertaken with young people to develop their identity developing a positive self view and emotional resilience. Some life story work is evident which helps young people develop an understanding of their background. Each young person has a designated worker for the one-to-one sessions which are held regularly.

Young people have good access to a range of health professionals to meet their physical, emotional and psychological needs. All health appointments are up to date. Young people are helped to understand how to live a healthy lifestyle and have prompt access to doctors and other health professionals, including specialist services such as the sexual health workers, the looked after children's nurse and a clinical psychologist.

Young people attend school and have made good progress from their admission to the home. Educational attainment for many is comparable with their peers. Where young people refuse or are excluded for periods of time they are encouraged to spend time constructively in the home by the staff.

Young people benefit from good contact arrangements with their family and friends, where there are restrictions these are noted in the placement plans and in the best interests of the young people to safeguard their welfare. However, it is not clear that the placing social worker has consented to the restriction. Contact arrangements are clearly outlined in individual placement plans.

Young people are encouraged to develop self care and life skills; this is in line with their age and abilities. They are encouraged to keep their bedrooms tidy and help with mealtimes and household chores. Pathway planning has commenced for some young people, however, at the time of this inspection plans cannot be located but the manager has requested these.

Quality of care

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

At the time of this inspection there had been a problematic time and some disruption during the night before the visit. This is not a frequent occurrence at this home. This led to young people being varied in their feedback about their relationships with staff. Some say they have good relationships and others say they do not. Records in the home show that some good work has been undertaken with young people by the staff in the home in key worker sessions. Comments from young people varied from 'staff are fun to be around ... there is a good bunch of managers' 'staff are alright' to 'I don't feel cared for or looked after' ... 'sometimes I feel like I am alone growing up'.

The home holds regular meetings with young people about the day-to-day running of the home. Young people's comments about their care experience at the time of this visit were varied again; mainly negative. There are issues about the rules, advocacy, making complaints, locking of communal areas of the home and on the first day of the inspection access to young people's bedrooms. The manager is in the process of planning how these matters could be addressed.

Young people know how to make a complaint; records in the home demonstrate that this is the case. Outcomes of all complaints made to the home are clearly recorded. Some young people say 'there is no point in making complaints'. One complaint to the Children's Rights Service has not been sufficiently supported by the home. Young people have mobile telephones but if they have no credit they cannot access independent advocacy and they have to ask staff to use the home's telephone. Details are not included in the children's guide of Independent Reviewing Officers, the Children's Rights Director or Ofsted if young people wish to raise concerns.

Staff are effective at promoting the health of young people. The home provides a

healthy environment to the young people. They have a healthy balanced diet and staff promote a healthy lifestyle through a range of activities. Staff are also proactive and consistent in promoting educational achievement, they engage well with schools and promote attendance. Young people are supported to achieve their educational potential. Outcomes for young people regarding their education are good.

There are a range of purposeful and enjoyable activities available in and outside of the home. There are a good range of activities planned throughout the holidays and a holiday is planned in the coming weeks. Young people have their own activity plans for each week.

The home is instructed to take emergency admissions and this has had an impact on the overall stability of the home as young people can be disadvantaged in respect of their records upon admission. There is reference to the making of such placements in the Statement of Purpose, however, this lacks the detail required and does not give clear policy or procedural guidance to staff in respect of admitting young people in such circumstances.

Young people's placement plans identify their diverse and individual needs; although it is not clear how needs in relation to cultural identity will be met in the local area. Young people are involved in developing their placement plans and confirm they know why they are living at the home and what is happening with their future plans. Young people are successfully encouraged to take an active part in their statutory reviews and other planning meetings.

The home is in a suitable location it is a detached property which benefits from good maintenance and the overall appearance of the home is good. The home benefits from a large garden and outdoor furniture. On the first day of the inspection staff were restricting young people's access to their bedrooms, this is not included in the behaviour management policy. In addition young people's access to the kitchen is routinely restricted at night; there is no clear risk assessment as to why this institutionalised practice continues for the current group of young people resident.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people report that there is no bullying taking place in the home; there is a clear policy in place to manage such behaviours. Young people can identify an adult that they can speak to if they have any worries or concerns. Some young people say that they feel safe; that they are not in any danger, and others say sometimes they do not feel safe. Staff recognise particular vulnerabilities relating to the diverse needs of young people, and take appropriate action to address them.

Young people's safety is regularly reviewed. Staff have undertaken a lot of work in this area to develop young people's understanding about how to protect and keep themselves safe. Individual risk assessments are in place about actions staff must

take, but in one case there is no guidance for staff in relation to managing incidents of self harming behaviour. Even where the frequency of these incidents is low this may mean that young people are not totally clear about the support available to them at this time.

The home maintains good records of any periods of young people being missing from care. The frequency of absences has reduced. The home has good links with the local police and works within the agreed protocol for managing young people being missing. Some young people have been in the home for long periods of time and have achieved placement stability.

Positive behaviour is encouraged by the staff in the home. Young people have weekly targets to work towards that target problematic behaviours and to encourage positive outcomes such as attending school, stopping swearing, getting up on time and keeping their bedroom tidy. Staff were observed to be dealing with some challenging issues. However, locking off areas of the home and restricting access to young people's bedrooms and other areas of the home to manage behaviour is not a positive intervention and some young people say 'it feels like us and them'.

Staff in the home are trained to de-escalate and diffuse negative behaviour to reduce the likelihood of restraint. There have been occasions where the staff have used restraint to manage behaviour, on the whole these are well recorded. Where staff have dealt with an incident where there have been brief interventions the duration is not clearly recorded. Young people do not routinely record their views about restraint.

There are shortfalls in the staff files maintained by the home; all staff have a disclosure from the Criminal Records Bureau, however, there is little information regarding any agency workers in terms of a complete employment history, there are also gaps in the same records for permanent staff.

Investigations into allegations or suspicions of harm are handled fairly, quickly, and consistently in a way that provides effective protection for young people, the person making the allegation, and at the same time supports the person who is the subject of the allegation. There is good record keeping in the home about any allegations made and how they have been dealt with.

Staff have had good training in recognising and responding to any concerns about the welfare of young people and they are clear about their responsibilities including the authority's whistleblowing procedures.

The environment is physically safe the home maintains risk assessments which are subject to review and all the required checks have been undertaken.

Leadership and management

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

The registered manager is suitably qualified, experienced and has been registered to the service since the time of the last inspection.

At the time of the last inspection there was one requirement in relation to ensuring that social workers consent to any restrictions placed upon the young person's use of their mobile telephone. Restrictions are appropriately in place at the time of this visit but evidence cannot be located in respect of one young person, therefore this requirement is repeated. There were two recommendations in respect of a room search log which has been addressed and ensuring young people have their views recorded in the restraint record; this is partially addressed as the record does contain some comments.

The home has a full-time and part-time vacancy at present. In addition, there are other factors including annual leave and a misunderstanding about the rota arrangements the have led to the use of agency workers and this can disrupt the continuity of care for young people. The manager tries to ensure that wherever possible the bank staff employed by the local authority are those who work in the home on a regular basis.

The home has a track record which indicates that there is capacity for continuing improvement. The manager was proactively addressing matters arising during the inspection. The overall judgement has changed at the time of this visit to satisfactory as shortfalls are not being highlighted in the manager's monitoring or the Regulation 33 monitoring of the home; in respect of restraint records and staff files.

The home has a clear Statement of Purpose and children's guide, there is also a booklet for parents. In feedback from parents one commented that they were not aware of arrangements in relation to reviews, restraint or complaints. These give good information about the overall operation of the home but the Statement of Purpose does not include the home's policy and procedures for emergency admissions. In addition the children's guide does not include details about how to contact Independent Reviewing Officers, the Children's Rights Director or Ofsted if young people wish to raise concerns with inspectors.

Staff say they have good access to training to enable them to effectively work with young people. In addition staff comment that they receive good support and regular supervision.

Children's files are satisfactorily maintained and staff pursue missing information with social workers. Staff liaise well with other professionals involved to ensure that children get a good service. A social worker said, 'staff are on the ball ... they keep me informed ... they are very tolerant'.

Equality and diversity practice is **satisfactory**.

