

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Jim Palmer
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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

This children's home provides care and accommodation for up to four young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties, aged between eight and 17 years and is owned by a registered charity.

The home is a detached property with communal areas. It is situated in a town close to local amenities and public transport links. Each young person has their own bedroom and a number of communal areas are provided for recreational activities. Separate facilities are provided for staff, together with a meeting room and office space.

The ground floor comprises a lounge, dining room, kitchen, activity room and cloakroom. Four young people currently live in the home of which three were present during the inspection.

Overall effectiveness

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

Strengths of the service are the quality of relationship between young people and staff, highly child focussed practice and skill in meeting the individual needs of young people and a strong commitment to ensuring that young people's views are sought and young people are engaged in the day-to-day running of the home. This includes staff selection.

The two recommendations arising from the previous inspection are both met. Behaviour management plans now provide clear guidance for staff in managing young people's behaviour. Fire drills, including one at night are now completed appropriately.

The home is well managed and the quality of the service is regularly monitored, by the manager and visiting manager. The manager's commitment to continuous improvement is impressive.

Areas for further development include ensuring that a copy of the placing authority's plan for the care of each child is held in the home. Ensuring that all records are maintained to satisfactory standards and staff are clear about the delegation of consents for medical treatment.

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
28 (2001)	ensure there is a copy of the plan for the care of the child prepared by the placing authority for each child containing all matters set out in Schedule 3. (Regulation 28 (1))	31/12/2011

Recommendations

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

- ensure there is a system in place to monitor the quality and adequacy of record keeping in the home and take action when needed (NMS 22.1)
- ensure the home homes appropriately signed consent for medical treatment for each child. (NMS 6.5)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people are given excellent opportunities to gain a full understanding of their history and background. There are numerous therapeutic interventions provided for young people dealing with a number of emotional issues. The staff celebrate success in school, college or social settings in order to promote self-esteem. Young people say that they are now more confident in making decisions about their future and in resolving difficulties between themselves and others in an appropriate way, for example resolving issues about bullying or personal relationships. Staff have a very good knowledge of young people's plans and individual circumstances.

Each young person has a personal health care plan and as a result are able to access suitable services to meet their physical, emotional and psychological health. The home has excellent links with local child and adolescent mental health services and specialist therapeutic services such as play, art and talking therapies. Specialist psychiatric and psychological support is available to young people. Staff are trained in working with young people experiencing personal trauma. Access to these services is strength of this service.

Staff are trained in the administration of medicines and there are systems in place for the storage and issuing of medicines, however staff have not gained signed consent from parents for the seeking of medical consent if required.

Young people's education is encouraged and supported by the home and there is an expectation that young people attend school or college. The staff liaise closely with school and attend meetings and school events as a parent would. Some young people are making very good progress at school, given a history where this has not always been the case. Young people are encouraged and supported in continuing their education, for example by securing places on vocational courses at a local college. Staff offer support to young people maintaining good attendance rates, however some young people have difficulty in consistently maintaining this.

Young people are encouraged to participate in a wide range of leisure activities that enable socialisation and promote self-esteem, however some young people as they grow older prefer to socialise with friends and not participate in organised leisure activities.

Young people say that they are expected to keep their bedroom clean and tidy and participate in the general upkeep of the home including some meal preparation and shopping for household items. Young people are provided with an individual programme aimed at developing greater life and social skills to support them in the transition to adulthood and leaving care. Staff liaise closely with families, placing social workers and leaving care workers when applicable to support young people when they leave the home and move into greater independence. This may involve encouraging young people to take greater responsibility for travelling independently, shopping and catering for themselves to a fixed budget and making and keeping appointments, such as with doctors and schools or colleges. Staff promote and support contact between young people and their families in accordance with the local authority plan for the care of the young person.

The service also maintains contact with young people after they leave the home and continue to provide on-going after care support for an indefinite period. Young people frequently return to visit, after they have left the home. This is a valued support contact for young people now living in the community.

Quality of care

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

A strength of the service is the quality of relationships between young people and staff. Staff actively engage with young people and young people benefit from the strength of relationship that exists with staff. Young people say that staff treat them with respect and are consistently interested in promoting their welfare.

There are excellent systems for involving young people in decision making and consulting with them about their views. These include weekly community meetings, team meetings which young people attend, placement reviews and planning meetings. Young people participate in the staff recruitment and selection process. In addition all young people are invited to participate in surveys and a cross service consultation council. The company seeks actively to engage young people in these

processes. Young people confirm they have excellent opportunities for consultation and expressing their views. They also say that if their wishes cannot always be implemented they are always given good reasons why this is not felt to be in their interests.

No complaints have been made since the last inspection, however young people are confident that any concern they raise will be taken seriously and fairly looked into. Young people are encouraged to discuss minor issues and concerns in the community meetings in order to encourage participation in conflict resolution.

All young people have comprehensive placement plans which detail individual needs and how they will be met. However a copy of the plan for the care of the child prepared by the placing authority containing all matters as set out in schedule 3 is not in place for each child. Staff advocate on behalf of young people and are successful in ensuring that young people are given the opportunity to achieve at school and in the wider community. The home follows a social pedagogy model of working with young people, in order to achieve positive outcomes. Young people say they have made significant progress in all areas of their lives and developed a good understanding of their lives and backgrounds. Young people's highly individual needs and differences are recognised and worked with by staff. There are excellent communication systems between staff to ensure that individual differences are consistently acted on by changing staff teams, this was evidenced in detailed staff handover information and case records. The staff team is committed to the promotion of equality and diversity, through culturally themed evenings and encouraging young people to consider individual differences, languages and cultures.

Young people fully participate in their reviews and planning meetings and say that they are encouraged and supported in participating by their key workers and all staff.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people say that they feel safe in the home and that the staff are strongly committed to promoting their safety. All staff receive regular training in safeguarding awareness and are knowledgeable about how they should respond to senior managers within the company if they had any child protection concerns. However, some staff are not as confident of the procedures of how to contact the local authority.

The safety of young people who are absent from the home without authority is promoted by the implementation of a local protocol between the home, the police and children's services. All young people who are missing or who fail to return when agreed are reported as missing in accordance with their placement plan and the local protocol. On their return to the home young people are given the opportunity to discuss any reasons they may have for being absent and how they may have placed themselves at risk. The home has good systems for notifying all appropriate people of any significant concerns. All staff are aware of these systems.

Staff show high levels of skill in recognising risk factors for young people and discussing with them strategies for keeping themselves safe. All young people have personal behaviour management plans and individual risk assessments aimed at keeping themselves and others safe. These have been reviewed since the last inspection and now provide clear guidance to staff on how to manage young people's behaviours. The home makes minimal use of sanctions; young people are supported by staff in developing self-responsibility for the consequences of their behaviour, by the use of a behaviour management model based on rewards, praise and restorative justice. The managers promote the recognition of positive behaviours, rather than the use of sanctions. No physical intervention has been used on young people since the last inspection.

Robust staff recruitment systems promote the welfare of young people. No staff start working until all employment checks are fully completed and young people are involved in the staff selection process.

The physical safety of young people and staff is maintained by rigorous risk assessments for the home, equipment, activities and individuals. Fire safety equipment is regularly checked by health and safety co-ordinators and fire drills are now taking place at appropriate times and dates.

Leadership and management

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

Young people benefit from living in a well-managed home. The management team provide clear leadership and direction to staff. The service has a good track record for implementing recommendations and requirements from previous inspections and managers have a sound knowledge of the strengths and weakness of the service. Both recommendations arising from the previous inspection have been met.

The quality of service is regularly monitored by internal and visiting managers and the home has a clear service development which is reviewed regularly in team meetings, ensuring that staff are aware of how they can contribute to improving the quality of the service provided. There are excellent systems for consulting young people and involving them in decision making. Young people are actively encouraged to comment on the quality of service and they all say they are able to have a say in service development including the staff recruitment process. As a result young people develop self-confidence, self-esteem and positive relationships with staff. For example young people have worked with staff to create a profile of staff qualities and interview questions for the staff selection process. Practice in this area is excellent.

The Statement of Purpose and young persons' guide is regularly reviewed and accurately describes the service. Alternative formats can be made available to young people if required. Young people are aware of the content of the young persons' guide to the home, though were not directly involved in the design. The managers

are considering ways of involving young people in future editions.

There is sufficient staffing to meet young people's needs. There is one vacancy in the staff team and recruitment to that post is underway, however there is also one placement vacancy, so staffing levels remain in excess of those required. Young people are supported by a well trained and regularly supervised staff team. All staff with the exception of those completing their probationary period hold a recognised qualification.

There are robust systems in place for recruiting staff which promotes the safety of young people; no visitors to the home are able to have unsupervised contact with young people unless all checks have been satisfactorily completed.

The policy on notifying appropriate agencies of any significant incidents is known and understood by staff and all necessary notifications have been made to Ofsted since the last inspection. Records are generally well structured and up to date and regularly audited, however despite this not all entries are signed and dated by the author. Young people's privacy is promoted, by the secure holding of confidential information.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.