

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Sonya Robinson
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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 can provide care and accommodation for up to five children or young people from the ages of 10 years to 17 years, with emotional or behavioural difficulties.

The home is owned by a private organisation.

Overall effectiveness

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

Young people living in this home benefit greatly from a staff group who demonstrate commitment to addressing welfare issues. The staff team are child focused and supportive, creating opportunities for young people to reach their potential. Young people said they have positive relationships with staff. They confirm that their views are routinely sought and acted upon. The staff encourage them to make decisions about their lives and influence the way that the home is run.

Staff are particularly good at making sure that young people are looked after in a way that is specific to how they are and want to be. The young people benefit greatly from the staff's efforts to promote the value of education.

Staff work closely with other services to meet the range of young people's needs. Young people have contact with those who are important to them. Proactive support is in place to help them learn skills that they will need for later in life. This enables young people to make progress in a number of areas within their lives.

Good risk management and fire safety practices help to keep young people safe. Staff are experienced and competent. The manager has suitable systems to monitor, maintain and to improve the quality of care in the home.

Minor shortfalls have been found in educational placements and healthcare plans, though active progress is being made in these areas. Young people having inconsistent access to independent advocates particular through the missing from care process. Some areas of the environment are showing signs of wear and tear and not all staff have attained an appropriate childcare qualification.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure children understand their health needs, how to maintain a healthy lifestyle and to make informed decisions about their own health, through for example, a health care plan (NMS 6.2)
- ensure children are supported to attend school, college or alternative provision regularly (NMS 8.3)
- ensure that the home provides a comfortable and homely environment and is well maintained and decorated, for example ensuring bedroom carpets as identified are cleaned or replaced (NMS 10.3)
- ensure that where a child goes missing and there is concern for their welfare, or at the request of a child who has been missing, staff arrange a meeting between the child and the responsible authority in private to consider the reasons for the child going missing (NMS 5.9)
- ensure that all existing care staff have attained a minimum level 3 qualification. This was previously National Vocational Qualification in Caring for Children and Young People and from September 2010 is the, Children and Young Peoples Workforce Diploma. (NMS 18.5)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

The staff support young people well by talking, and using activities to build relationships with the young people. As a result, young people have gained a good knowledge and understanding of themselves, they are adapting well to new situations and their view of themselves is more positive. Young people say that 'staff are kind'. Young people's progress at the home is good because great value is placed upon them fulfilling their potential.

Young people enjoy good health because their health needs are effectively identified and services are provided to meet them. They are encouraged and supported to attend routine appointments with dentists, doctors and opticians. Young people are supported to take some responsibility for managing their own health needs such as making their own health appointments, subject to age and maturity. The young people's health is closely monitored and record keeping is good. However, not all young people had a health plan in place due to being recently placed. Staff continually work with young people and inform medical professionals of health progress. Specialist health workers are involved where appropriate to promote good health and discourage unhealthy behaviours such as smoking, self harm and sexual health. Healthy activities take place such as swimming, walking and going to the gym.

Young people can choose their food, and the food served is both healthy and nutritious. The staff are aware of individual young people's likes and dislikes to ensure that they enjoy the food served. Matters arising from diversity are well managed. Staff encourage young people to eat healthy foods and snacks. One young person reinforced this, stating, 'we help choosing the menus, are involved in cooking meals and I like the food.'

Appropriate educational placements are actively pursued by the staff, however not all recent admissions have an educational placement yet. The management and staff of the home are keen that young people's education is disrupted as little as possible to ensure that they can attend and achieve. Young people who have recently moved on from the home have made excellent progress in their education and have achieved very good GCSE results, despite missing long periods of education prior to being admitted to this home. This can also be attributed to staff working in a determined manner, to ensure that young people are making good progress in attendance and achievement in their education. Contact between the home and school is frequent and effective, enabling staff to support young people successfully with homework or personal targets.

Young people said they have regular contact that is important to them, and where appropriate they can have friends and family come to visit them. This is supported by staff who encourage contact and facilitate visits well. This is done safely and sensitively to protect young people's welfare.

Young people learn life skills through taking part in the tasks of running the home, such as social skills, laundry, cooking skills, budgeting and shopping. Young people work through an independence booklet to make sure they are well prepared for looking after themselves when they are older. Therefore, young people receive care which is preparing them well for adulthood.

Quality of care

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

Young people feel their views are taken seriously and they have a say in the running of the home. They have regular house meetings and regular one to one time with their key worker and other members of staff. Young people know how to make formal complaints and there is a clear complaint's recording format in place.

The staff fully enable young people to develop their own identity through promoting personal choice in such issues as clothing, interests, sports and hobbies. Cultural needs are clearly described in residential placement plans.

The premises of the children's home are in good decorative order and there is a maintenance programme in place. However, one bedroom carpet was heavily stained and there was a number of scorch marks from heated hair appliances. Young people's bedrooms and indeed the communal areas themselves to a degree are

personalised with young people's belongings, tastes, styles and achievements.

Effective arrangements are in place to gather information about young people who are referred for admission to the children's home. This helps the Registered Manager to make a robust decision about whether the home can meet their needs and about how their admission might affect the young people already living there.

Residential placement plans are clear and comprehensive. This enables the staff to be fully informed about young people's needs and how to meet them. The plans are reviewed regularly and young people are fully involved in the review process.

Staff follow detailed guidance relating to the medication. This means that young people receive the medication they need at the appropriate times. All medicines are stored safely in a suitable, locked cabinet. This means that young people's health needs overall are met to a good standard.

The staff support young people's learning through promoting education. Young people are also assisted in their preparation towards adulthood and developing life skills, such as cooking, form filling and budgeting.

Young people have access to a range of activities and they are encouraged to share leisure time with families when appropriate. Young people also engage with staff in attending leisure facilities in order to try new experiences. Young people are gaining confidence in their abilities, through guidance given by staff. The staff team provide young people with constant praise for all their achievements, which is done with sincerity.

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 strong sense of safety and well-being. Young people said that they felt safe living at the home and there were no issues of bullying. Young people said that they "get on ok".

Staff demonstrate commitment to preserving the confidentiality, dignity and privacy of young people and they have a good understanding of safeguarding issues. The home actively takes steps to make sure that young people missing from home are protected. If young people go missing, staff will try to find them and keep in touch by mobile telephone to encourage them to return and ensure they are safe. Staff are aware and do not exceed the measures they can take to prevent a child leaving without permission under current legislation and government guidance. The home has developed good links with the local police and follows agreed local protocols regarding young people missing from care. Incidents are recorded appropriately. However, young people do not consistently have access to independent advocates on their return to the home to provide further safeguards for the young people placed. Risk assessments are in place detailing individual needs and agreed strategies to

support and protect young people.

There are good monitoring systems in place whereby the management team look at behaviour management to ensure that appropriate action has been taken, that is that it is fair and reasonable. Young people have clear and consistent boundaries and know what is expected of them and what is unacceptable. Staff praise young people when they do well and reward them. Staff assist young people to learn to manage their behaviour and solve problems. Young people are aware of what is expected of them. Physical intervention is used as a last resort and is not common place within this service. Recording systems for sanctions show that staff are reasonable in their approach when applying consequences. This have resulted in a large number of rewards given within the home. Rewards have included CD's, extra clothing, DVD evening with 'sweets and treats', young people say 'the pamper evenings are really cool'.

Young people live in a physically safe environment. They are protected by a range of health and safety procedures, risk assessments and checks. Staff carry out regular health and safety checks, including fire drills, 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 very thorough to make sure young people are protected. The management team carefully ensures that staff have the skills and competencies to meet the needs of individual young people. Also, there are suitable systems in place to ensure that visitors to the home are suitably checked and supervised to protect young people.

Leadership and management

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

Young people live in a home that is effectively managed in their best interests. The home meets the aims and objectives of its Statement of Purpose and young people, their families and social workers are clear about the services and support provided. The Statement of Purpose and young person's guide reflect new statutory guidance and legislation and are accessible to staff and young people. Feedback from Local Authority social workers who have placed young people in this service is that 'communication is good and we are kept up to date' and that 'staff are pleasant, professional and good humoured.'

Young people enjoy good outcomes because of the commitment of the management team and the staff team. The management team and staff demonstrate a commitment to delivering good quality care to all young people. They have developed a business development plan which has identified strengths and some areas for development for the service, for example ongoing staff training and working closely with placing authorities.

On the last inspection undertaken in March 2011, two recommendations were made. These were in relation to documentation regarding room searches. This has been undertaken and maintained and the second recommendation was regarding staff

obtaining a relevant childcare qualification. There has been some progress in this area. However, not all existing care staff have attained a minimum National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) at level 3. This was previously the NVQ in Caring for Children and Young People, but from September 2010 is the, Children and Young People's Workforce Diploma. Therefore this recommendation is repeated on this inspection.

Care staff within the home receive regular one-to-one supervision from a senior member of staff. This provides important extra support for staff to discuss specific issues. Young people's records are organised and contain up to date information about them, including relevant documents from placing authorities. There are also systems in place to notify relevant authorities of any significant issues that may occur within the home or with regards to the young people placed. This provides further safeguards for the young people placed within this home.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.