

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Chris Scully
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This children's home cares for up to three children from six years to 17 years old with emotional and behavioural difficulties. It is owned and managed by a limited company.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: a service that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

Good: a service 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**.

There is a very positive atmosphere in the home and staff work very well together as a team. Young people are provided with highly personalised care which effectively meets their personal preferences, individual and diverse needs. Staff value young people's opinions, wishes and feelings. These are central to the planning and organisation of the home. Young people are confident to put forward their views, for example, who can or cannot help with the decorating in their room. Young people benefit from positive relationships with staff, which are built upon honesty and trust.

Young people are safe, because of the effective safeguarding procedures and health and safety checks implemented within the home. Although, there are some issues with the security of the premises. Records and documentation are well maintained and contribute well to the ongoing care and support provided. Some information relating to Ofsted and the Children's Rights Officer is not available to young people. Monitoring of the home is more robust although some monitoring reports are not received by the appropriate persons within the required timescales. The recommendations from the last inspection have been mainly met.

Social workers and other professionals who work with young people placed at the home are complimentary about the care that young people receive. They say, 'they thank staff for their support' which has enabled the young people to make good progress in all aspects of their development. Also, the home keeps them well informed of the young people's progress. They work well with schools and tutors to support young people's education achievement.

As a result of this inspection one statutory requirement and three recommendations

are made. These relate to the security of the premises, the young people's guide, monitoring of the home and physical restrictions within the home. The Registered Manager has already begun to address these issues.

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
31 (2001)	ensure that all parts of the children's home used by children are secure from unauthorised access. (Regulation 31 (2) (a))	31/05/2012

Recommendations

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

- ensure physical restrictions on the normal movement within the home, such as locking the kitchen at night are only used when agreed with the responsible authority and, if appropriate, the parents (NMS 10.4)
- ensure the children's guide contains information as to how a young person can contact the Children's Rights Director and Ofsted should they wish to raise a concern (NMS 13.5)
- ensure a written report of the conduct of the home is prepared after the visit and is made available to Ofsted and the Registered Manager within the prescribed timescales. (Volume 5, statutory guidance, paragraph, 3.13)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people have a positive view of themselves and a secure understanding of their background and family ties. They are increasing in maturity and are more able to deal with difficult situations in a productive manner. Young people have strong links with their families and friends and enjoy the opportunities to see them on a regular basis. Contact arrangements are managed very well and take into account the individual needs of each young person. This means young people are able to build and sustain positive relationships with those people who are important to them.

Young people are developing an understanding of their own health care needs. They

are generally fit and well and are confident to talk to staff if they are feeling unwell. Young people are able to hold honest discussions with staff regarding potential ongoing health care issues and come to agreements as how this will be monitored. Young people are aware of the support agencies available to them, such as child and adolescent mental health teams (CAHMS) and sexual health clinics. Young people are able to make informed choices because of the information and support provided by staff. They talk confidently about having a tattoo and how they decided upon the design and what this represents. They are very aware of the potential health issues and provide reassurances to staff about how they are taking care of these.

They are aware of the importance of eating healthily and are working with the staff to compile weekly menus. Menus are healthy, nutritious and take into account their specific preferences. Young people say they enjoy spaghetti bolognese and roast dinners, but only if they are prepared by specific staff. Young people are beginning to engage in preparing meals and snacks in preparation for adulthood.

Young people are mostly engaging with tutors to support their education. They are more positive about their future life choices and are attending interviews at local colleges. Young people are keen to explain about their potential business venture and are confidently talking to staff about what they will need to do to achieve their goal. They are aware of some of the safety equipment they will need to have in place such as circuit breakers and are liaising with staff and other professionals about this. Consequently, young people are able to keep themselves and others safe.

Young people are growing in confidence and are developing skills for life. They are able to make decisions about their lives and to influence what happens in the future. They are involved in decisions about the home, such as the décor in the bedrooms. Young people are pleased to have the opportunities to decorate their room with staff. Although they are very clear on which staff can and cannot assist in future as they feel that some of their decorating skills are 'rubbish'. Young people have designed the colour schemes, accessories and bedding and are working well to achieve what they want on their budget. Staff are very proud of the young people's progress which they say is 'brilliant'. Young people are confident to manage their own finances and beginning to undertake a range of household tasks, such as mowing the lawn. Consequently, young people are developing a wide range of skills and experiences to support their independence.

Quality of care

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

Young people enjoy very positive and constructive relationships with staff. They are confident to talk to staff about everyday events and any issues that may be concerning them. Staff actively seek young people's views about their care and the running of the home. There is plenty of friendly banter between young people and staff. This includes laughing as they ask how they can get the home to 'fail', and explaining how they had to re-cut the lawn; as the 'staff left it looking like it had a

Mohican'(haircut). Lively exchanges take place with plenty of laughter as to why this happened. Staff act as positive role models. They use effective communication skills to enhance young people's awareness of socially acceptable behaviours. This means young people are generally polite and respectful towards staff and others.

Regular house meeting are facilitated and provide young people with good opportunities to have a say about things, such as activities and menus. Young people feel valued and respected as staff listen to what they have to say and are responsive to their ever changing needs. Key working sessions provide one-to-one support for young people and the opportunities to discuss things privately with staff. Young people are aware that it may not always be possible to act upon their wishes. They say that they know that staff will be honest in their discussions with them and help them understand the reasons why. Young people are aware of who they can talk to if they have any concerns or wish to make a complaint. Young people show increasing confidence as they talk about what is going well for them and what they would like to see changed, such as the restrictions to the kitchen.

Young people feel valued and respected as individuals. This is because of the well written, highly personalised placement plans which clearly identify their individual and diverse needs. Young people are fully aware of their content, as they have a say in their creation. Young people are confident to attend their reviews and to have a say in the decisions made about them. If young people decide not to attend staff ensure their views and wishes are presented to the panel and are given due consideration. Social workers are complimentary about the home. They say verbal and written information from the home is positive and demonstrates 'the good progress young people continue to make in a supportive environment.' Others say that the support provided by the home has made 'a big difference to young people.'

Young people's health care needs are effectively identified in planning meetings and individualised health care plans demonstrate how these will be addressed. The home has good working relationships with local health care professionals. Young people's health is effectively promoted as they are registered with a General Practitioner, dentist and other health care services. The home ensures all outstanding information pertaining to young people's health care needs is followed up. This ensures that they are all up-to-date with the immunisations and other health checks.

Young people's emotional health needs are well supported. Staff say that young people are more confident and able to talk about their feelings and to reflect upon past experiences. This enables them to consider how these experiences have affected them and how they can move forward. The systems for the administration and storage of medication are robust. This means that young people receive the medication they need at the appropriate times.

Staff have high aspirations for young people's education. They are proactive in supporting young people's interests, for example, sourcing information on college courses. Staff help young people to prepare for interviews by coaching them in answering questions and talking to them about how best to present themselves. They work in collaboration with tutors to plan activities that will engage young

people's interests. Tutors report that home is very supportive of young people's education and are working well with them to engage the young people with their learning. Staff confidently challenge barriers to young people's education, including some young people's feelings of negativity towards their studies. They liaise well with schools and ensure they have all the necessary information to support each young person's education. This means young people are able to make progress in their education.

Other professionals report on how 'great' young people were at a event where by they spoke to a large number of students and professionals regarding their experiences in care. They say, 'they were a credit to themselves.' Staff are very proud of the young people and say this was a big achievement for them. Young people are offered a wide range on interesting and stimulating activities. Staff take an active interest in what young people are doing and support their interests.

Young people live in a warm, welcoming, homely environment that meets their needs. Young people's bedrooms are personalised to reflect their interests and individual tastes. The home is decorated and maintained to a good standard. The rear garden is maintained and provides a comfortable area for relaxation, games or for carrying out repairs to young people's bicycles.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people are safeguarded because of the staff's secure understanding of the home's safeguarding and child protection procedures. This means they are clear on the action to take should they have any concerns about a young people. Staff are committed to preserving the confidentiality, dignity and privacy of young people. Positive relationships with social worker's means staff are fully aware of any issues which may impact upon young people's safety or well-being. This means they are able to take appropriate action to support each young person.

Being missing from care is not an issue for young people. Young people keep staff well informed of their whereabouts and their expected time home. This means should a young person not return home on time they can be quickly located and return home safely. Clear procedures are in place should a young people be missing which are in line with the local police protocols. Staff talk to young people about the potential dangers of this, which helps keep young people safe. Detailed risk assessments are in place which identify each young person's individual needs and strategies to support and protect them

Young people have clear and consistent boundaries and know what is expected of them and what is unacceptable. They are very aware of the house rules and generally meet these. Young people demonstrate increasing maturity when handling potentially challenging situations. They are able to talk through their feelings and to think through their actions and the implications for them, such as not receiving their incentive monies. Consequently, the use of sanctions and incidents of restraint are

minimal.

Staff carry out regular health and safety checks of the premises including the certification for gas, electricity and fire safety check. Regular fire drills means young people and staff are aware of what to do in an emergency. However, the front and rear doors are not appropriately secure and means unauthorised persons may gain access to the property. However, young people are effectively supervised which minimises the risk of this and the Registered Manager has taken immediate action to rectify this issue.

Staff recruitment practices within the home ensure all staff are suitably vetted to ensure they are suitable to work with young people. Visitors to the home are suitably vetted, are required to sign in and out and are effectively supervised throughout their visit. This helps to safeguard young people.

Leadership and management

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

The home is managed by a committed and competent Registered Manager. The home has a comprehensive development plan in place, which includes an agenda for improvements. This demonstrates the home's commitment and capacity for ongoing improvement and how this will improve the outcomes for young people. Staff are very supportive of the Registered Manager and have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. They say that the Registered Manager is always available to talk to and their positive attitude means any issues are quickly resolved. Staff are very well supported on an individual basis and receive regular one-to-one professional supervision. This enables them to reflect upon their own practice and identify their future developmental needs.

Monitoring of the home by the Registered Manager and the independent person for the organisation is much improved. These reports provide a clear picture of what the home is doing well and the areas for improvement. Copies of the Registered Manager's monitoring visits are regularly submitted to Ofsted. However, reports from the independent person are not always sent to the Registered Manager and Ofsted within the required timescales. The Registered Manager is proactive in bringing about change and has taken immediate action to address the issues from this inspection.

Placing authorities, parents and others are clear on the aims and objectives of the home. This is because the Statement of Purpose clearly defines the home's objectives and the type of care and support young people can expect to receive. Social workers confirm they are pleased with the care and support provided. They say the Registered Manager and staff are very supportive of young people, which enables them to 'move forward'. Staff are regularly in contact with social workers. This means social workers are kept up-to-date with the young people's progress and any potential issues.

The young person's guide provides a detailed picture of what support young people

can expect while residing in the home. This includes the people available to talk to should they have any concerns. However the contact details for Ofsted are not complete and there is not reference to the Children's Rights Director. Young people are clear on who to speak to if they have concerns and happily chatted to the inspector during the visit.

At the last inspection the home was asked to consider the restrictions to the kitchen of an evening. The home has consulted with social worker's and the fire authority and has taken on board their recommendations. However, there is no actual record of consent from the placing authority. The recording within records has improved. This means there is a clear audit trail within the records, such as the sanctions book. All other records are well maintained and young people are encouraged to sign all entries although on some occasions they choose not to. Young people's records are organised and contain up-to-date information and relevant information from their placing authorities. All records, policies and documentation are checked on a regular basis to ensure the information remains current. This contributes to the good outcomes young people are achieving.

Young people are cared for by a committed team of staff who have a range of skills and experience. This enables the staff to provide good support to the young people. The staff team reflects the young people cultural backgrounds and provides both positive male and female role models. All staff hold a recognised qualification or are working towards one. Staff say that this is challenging but rewarding. This has enabled them to talk to the young people about what they are doing and to reflect upon their practice. A training development plan is in place which outlines when refresher training, such as 'Team teach' or safeguarding is required.

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.