

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Debbie Foster
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This privately run children's home provides care for up to four long-term placements for young people aged from 12 years old up to 17 years old.

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 **adequate**.

Staff are committed and have established sound quality of care practices. This is enabling young people to make progress. As a result, young people are achieving more positive outcomes in relation to their confidence, emotional resilience, contact, family relationships, aspects of their behaviour and keeping safe. Young people are positive about the care they receive at the home.

Overall, young people have positive relationships with staff. Young people are consulted about their care and they identify particular members of staff who they feel able to confide in. Young people say that they feel safe in the home and that there is no bullying. They are cared for safely.

Staff actively promote the value of education and encourage young people to attend. They liaise with schools and contribute to young people's education planning meetings. Some young people attend their education placement regularly. However, not all young people achieve a sufficiently good level of attendance at school to ensure they can achieve to their individual potential.

Young people who are of an age and are preparing for independence, have a plan to assist in this preparation. However, this plan and other supporting records are not specific and detailed enough. Practical skill based tasks are not routinely undertaken to ensure young people have all the skills and knowledge required to support themselves when leaving care.

The home has a staff training programme, but not all staff have had training in some key areas of their work, such as physical intervention and refresher training in mandatory areas.

Overall, young people's health needs are identified and the most are being met. Young people report that they eat healthily and that they have access to a range of activities that they enjoy; this helps to promote a healthy lifestyle. However, there are omissions, these are; some routine health appointments are missed and immunisations are not up-to-date for all young people. Long term health issues, such as smoking are not being fully addressed with young people. This is impacting negatively on the long term health for young people.

Good risk assessing and fire safety practices help to keep young people safe. Staff are experienced and trained in a variety of care and safety subjects. However, not all staff are following the risk assessments guidance and behaviour strategies. This has safety implications for young people as risks are not reduced or eliminated for them.

There are quality assurance systems in place. The manager has a plan for the future of the home, which identifies how they are looking to develop the services offered to young people. There are appropriate management monitoring arrangements in place to ensure that there is an oversight of the welfare of young people. However, the monitoring of the progress young people are making in line with their care plans and other supporting documents is not robust enough. The system is not ensuring all young people's care is being reviewed and that appropriate changes are being made to maximise the progress they should be making and minimise the lack of achievement in some areas.

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
11 (2001)	ensure that proper provision for the welfare of children accommodated, in particular that all health care check-ups and immunisations are undertaken and kept up-to-date (Regulation 11 (1) (a)) * *	14/07/2012
20 (2001)	promote and protect the physical health of young people, in particular, cease the practice of staff smoking in the presence of young people (Regulation 20 (1))	30/07/2012
11 (2001)	ensure proper provision of care, education, supervision and where appropriate treatment, of children accommodated. In particular that all staff follow and implement the risk assessments and behaviour strategies for each young person (Regulation 11 (1) (b))	30/07/2012
27 (2001)	ensure all persons employed receive appropriate training. In particular physical intervention training. (Regulation 27 (4) (a))	28/08/2012

*These requirements are subject to a compliance notice

Recommendations

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

- ensure staff receive sufficient and effective training on health promotion. In particular the effects of smoking and presenting positive role models (NMS 6.7)
- ensure that young people are helped by staff to achieve their educational or training goals. By working with a child's education provider to maximise each child's achievement and to minimise any underachievement. In particular, increasing attendance in education for all young people to assist in attainment (NMS 8.4)
- ensure that staff are provided with information and training so that they fully understand the particular challenges faced by looked after children in fulfilling their maximum educational potential. For example by understanding their responsibilities for enabling children to overcome educational barriers. In particular, achievement levels for examinations and how to support young people attaining good results (Volume 5, statutory guidance, paragraph, 2.121)
- ensure that young people receive the necessary care which helps them to prepare for and supports them into adulthood. In particular, by ensuring their care plan sets out specifically how and when they will be prepared for the world of work or education; moving into their own accommodation; developing practical skills; positive self-esteem; developing financial capability, knowledge and skills about entitlements to financial and other support after leaving care (NMS 12.1)
- ensure that all staff work is consistent with the Regulations and national minimum standards, the home's policies and procedures (NMS 21.3)
- build further on the monitoring systems, in line with the regulations. Ensure all records kept by the home are compliant with the home's policies, identify any concerns about specific incidents and identify patterns and trends. Then take immediate action to address any issues raised by this monitoring. In particular, the progress being made in health, education, risk assessments and behaviour management by young people. (NMS 21.2)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people are encouraged to develop a positive self-view. This is achieved through individualised care planning and is enabling young people to make suitable progress. The promotion of appropriate relationships assists staff to engage with young people, working with them, encouraging social and emotional development

and awareness of their own identity.

Young people live in an environment that is promoting their health and emotional well-being overall. Individual health outcomes for young people are being maintained and small steps are taken forward to support young people keeping healthy. Staff understand the importance of a well-balanced diet and support young people to attend routine health appointments. A young person said, 'I have been for dental and optician check-ups,' and another young person said, 'Staff make appointments for me to attend, but I don't always go.' Staff demonstrate some understanding of young people's health needs to assist in meeting young people's needs. However, some young people have not received all routine health appointments and have refused to attend and engage for some considerable time. Immunisations are not up-to-date for all young people. Other health issues which may have long-term health implications have not been robustly addressed with young people. For example smoking and staff are not leading by example in this area. Staff condone this activity by smoking with them in the grounds of the home, which does not promote good health and lifestyle.

Young people have positive and meaningful contact with family, friends and significant others. This promotes their identity needs. A parent said, 'I have weekly contact with my child and our relationship is better. I find the majority of staff very helpful. I think communication has improved after I raised an issue about this. I think my child's behaviour has improved since living at the home.' Staff understand the benefits of regular contact and build positive relationships with parents. This ensures improved communication and understanding between all parties, which is in young people's best interests.

Young people are supported by staff to practise independence skills including domestic tasks, cooking and managing money. Life skills plans for young people have been devised for individual young people. However, these are not specific enough to ensure young people attain all the necessary skills they require to be able to look after themselves before leaving care in the imminent future. The weekly planning and scheduling of life skills with each young person shows gaps and a lack of structure to support the continual and frequent promotion of independence skills. Records do not show the progress of young people are making. As a result, young people do not express confidence about their readiness for independence or adult life.

Quality of care

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

Young people live in a supportive environment. Relationships are a notable strength. Young people enjoy genuinely warm, friendly and positive relationships with staff. One young person said, 'I get on with all staff.' and went on to name particular staff that they have stronger connections with. Staff work hard to promote a culture of respect and acceptance in the home. As a result, young people enjoy strong relationships with most staff and each other.

Young people know how to make a complaint. Young people's concerns are taken very seriously and staff make every effort to sort the problem out. Young people say staff listen and are interested what they have to say. They confirm their wishes, feelings and views are regularly sought and feel involved in day-to-day decisions about the running of the home.

Young people are cared for overall, in line with their individual care plans and other supporting documents. They confirm they are regularly consulted about decisions affecting their lives. This has helped staff develop a good understanding of young people's needs and where appropriate, advocate on their behalf. Placement plans are based on assessment and identify young people's personal needs and the individual support they require. Care planning and staff practice recognises young people as individuals with different backgrounds, interests and views. This ensures young people receive individualised care that is tailored to meet their diverse needs.

Education is given importance in the home. Staff pursue educational placements for young people. However, the majority of young people have not made continued and sustained progress with regards to their school attendance and attainment from the starting point of their placements. Staff members are encouraging and they enable attendance and participation through practical support and the use of rewards. Staff are not well informed about educational key stage levels and the expected levels of progress young people should make within the school year. Therefore, this has a detrimental effect for young people in the future, reducing employment opportunities and life chances in adulthood.

Staff encourage young people to positively plan their leisure and recreation time. They encourage young people to follow their individual interests and develop their talents and skills. Young people are taking part in a range of leisure activities that they enjoy, these help to fully develop their social, creative and physical skills and confidence. For example, young people enjoy football, visiting the cinema, music and spending time with friends, family and staff.

Young people live in a suitably designed and comfortable house. There is good access to shops and community amenities that young people regularly use. The house is generally clean, tidy and reasonably well maintained. It is adequately decorated and reflects young people's needs and tastes. Young people are fully involved in personalising the communal areas and their bedrooms.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people say that they are safe and feel safe and they confirm that staff explain and talk to them about how to keep themselves safe and learn about risks. Staff indicate a good awareness of the risks identified for each young person. Where particular risks are identified, well-written risk assessments are recorded to help the staff understand what action to take to minimise the identified risks. This develops

young people's understanding and the reasons adults are concerned. As a result, young people's risk-taking behaviours reduce and they feel cared for and protected. However, during the inspection a risk assessment was not followed by the staff on duty. Therefore not ensuring an identified risk was reduced or eliminated. This action instigated negative behaviour escalating and an incident occurring.

The provider has very good safeguarding systems and procedures for staff to follow in the event of any allegation or suspicion of abuse. The manager and staff have received child protection training. Staff demonstrate a good knowledge and understanding of the safeguarding procedures to promote and protect young people's safety. Anti-bullying training is provided for staff and effective policies and procedures support this. Young people say that no bullying takes place and it is not an accepted behaviour in the home. There is good written guidance for staff to follow in the event of unauthorised absence. Young people with a history of absconding or going missing has reduced.

Sanctions are relevant and reflect the age and understanding of the young people. Any sanctions imposed are reviewed regularly for appropriateness and effectiveness. Personalised behaviour management plans are used. Staff demonstrate a good awareness of individual strategies to support and manage young people's behaviour. However, the police have been called to the home when some young people's behaviour has escalated recently. The management of behaviour of some young people during the inspection varied, negative behaviour is not always supported by positive engagement and the following of written behaviour strategies. It is rare that physical restraint is used to manage behaviour at the home. Record keeping is good and there is evidence that it is monitored well to identify patterns that can be used to support young people further.

Regular fire safety checks, general checks and maintenance arrangements ensure the home is physically safe and is kept safe. All staff have received fire safety training to enable them to minimise the risks to young people in the event of a fire at the home.

All staff are appropriately recruited and undergo suitable Criminal Records Bureau checks to ensure that they are suitable to work with young people.

Leadership and management

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

All of the recommendations made at the last inspection have been met. The actions that the organisation has taken to meet the recommendations show their commitment to improving the service for young people and to ensuring that the home meets the national minimum standards and supporting guidance. The refurbishment of the kitchen and shower room has been completed to bring further improvement to the environment that the young people live in. The home's development plan better identifies planned changes in the operation or resources of the service. Detailing more, how and when changes are to occur to bring

improvement to the quality of care and better outcomes for young people. All new staff that have completed their induction and probationary period have commenced a Workforce Diploma qualification; this supports staff who will be trained to care for young people and assist in meeting their needs.

Young people live in a home that is appropriately staffed. Staff report that they have regular supervision which enables them to discuss their care of young people and their training needs. They feel that they are well supported by their manager. Staff say that generally training opportunities within the organisation are good and that this enables them to develop the skills they need for their work. However, not all staff have had training in physical intervention and refresher training has not been provided to one member of staff in a timely fashion in a number of areas. This means that some staff are caring for young people without all the necessary skills to undertake their work with young people. The majority of staff are working towards completing the children's and young people diploma qualification.

The Statement of Purpose describes how the home works and how young people are cared for. The home fulfils its stated aims and objectives. The young person's guide to the service gives them clear information about the home. Young people confirm that they have been given a copy of this guide and the contents have been discussed with them.

Information that is held about young people is stored securely to protect confidentiality. Young people are encouraged to read their files and contribute their views to documents that are kept.

There are sound monitoring systems in place to promote the welfare of young people. These include the manager's monthly checks as well as those undertaken by a more senior manager in the organisation. Shortfalls that are identified during the monitoring process are addressed to drive forward improvements in the home. Copies of the reports of these visits are sent to Ofsted within the required timescales. However, the monitoring of the young people's progress in line with their care plans and other supporting documents is not robust enough. As a result, young people are not making sufficient progress in education and some aspects of their health. Notifications of all significant incidents are also sent to relevant authorities within the required timescales. These documents confirm that the manager and staff take appropriate action to keep young people safe.

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.