

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Janet Hunnam
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Date of last inspection	20/03/2012
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This privately owned children's home is registered to provide care and accommodation for one young person who has emotional and /or behavioural difficulties.

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**.

Young people thrive in a nurturing, supportive, well-structured home which provides a safe environment and consistent levels of care. The staff team focus on identifying young people's individual needs, strategies to protect young people and meet their specific needs. They provide boundaries within which young people have opportunities to achieve positive outcomes.

Young people are positive about the quality of care they receive and their relationships with staff. A young person stated 'I don't want to leave the home'. All staff work in accordance with detailed guidelines for behaviour management in a structured and application of boundaries approach. Continuous review and updating of care plans ensures the specific needs of young people are met. Young people are making significant progress in all aspects of their lives.

A number of shortfalls were identified. Procedures are in place for reporting young people if they go missing but these procedures do not include the local police protocol for young people who are missing from care. The recordings of restraints do not consistently identify any injuries sustained or confirm that the manager has spoken to the young person and the staff concerned in the incident. The manager however does monitor these records and signs each record. The recording of sanctions does not include reference to the effectiveness of the measure and do not confirm that the manager has spoken to the young person and the staff giving the sanction. Some staff do not have a suitable qualification in First Aid and thus there are occasions when staff work alone without such training, which has implications for a young person if an emergency occurs.

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
16 (2001)	ensure that a procedure to be followed when any child accommodated in the children's home is absent without permission has regard to any relevant local authority or police protocols on missing children (Regulation 16(4)(b))	13/07/2012
17B (2001)	ensure that the written record of restraint made in a volume kept for that purpose includes all the matters included in Regulation 17B(3) and Regulation 17B(4) (Regulation 17B(3) and 17B(4))	13/07/2012
17B (2001)	ensure that a written record of any sanction made in a volume kept for the purpose includes the effectiveness of the sanction and confirmation that the manager has spoken to the child concerned and the person using the sanction about the use of the sanction (Regulation 17B(3)(f) and 17B(3)(h))	13/07/2012
20 (2001)	ensure that at all times, at least one person on duty at the children's home has a suitable first aid qualification (Regulation 20(2)(e))	13/07/2012

Recommendations

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

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Within this safe and caring environment, young people benefit from highly individualised consistent support which helps them develop self-confidence. Young people have opportunities to participate in decisions about their lives in day to day matters and in decisions affecting their future.

Young people are taking responsibility for their health needs by attending medical appointments. They have an understanding of risks to their health which staff regularly address resulting in a decrease in such risk taking behaviours as alcohol use. They attend a smoking cessation clinic and sexual health clinic. They are aware of the importance of a healthy lifestyle as they move towards independence and

keeping themselves safe. Young people's emotional and psychological health is promoted by effective liaison with CAMHS and innovative use of the organisation's consultant psychologist as a Life Coach providing weekly individual sessions for young people. As a result, young people are developing coping strategies, emotional resilience and maturity enabling them to confidently make the steps towards independence.

Educationally, young people are making excellent progress in relation to their achievement and attendance particularly regarding their starting point. Young people have a positive attitude to their learning and aspire to continue their education enabling them to have opportunities to fulfil their potential. Young people make a positive contribution within the home and engage in the wider community. They are involved in a full independence programme to prepare them for leaving the home and becoming self-reliant. Their independence programme is designed to match their level of knowledge and skills and is implemented in a structured and staged way to build young people's confidence in their ability to be responsible for themselves. Young people have a bank account and money is deposited for them to budget, plan and shop for their food. They cook for themselves and budget for clothes, personal items, travel and activities as they move closer to living on their own. They travel independently, make their own medical appointments and seek part-time work. Consequently, young people acquire a range of life skills to prepare for changes when they leave the home. They access facilities in the local town and participate in activities of their choice such as weekly horse-riding, ice-skating and guitar lessons.

Staff are pro-active in establishing regular contact for young people with their family. Family members are welcomed at the home. Staff support family members and help them understand incidents of risk taking behaviour by young people. Staff contact family members on a weekly basis to update them on progress and promote positive outcomes. Consequently young people benefit from improved family relationships.

Quality of care

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

Young people experience positive relationships with staff which are built on trust and mutual respect. Staff provide consistent care with boundaries based on the individual needs of young people. Detailed risk assessments inform guidelines for staff. Staff apply strategies enabling young people to learn about themselves and develop appropriate behaviour and self-esteem. Consequently young people thrive within this nurturing and stable environment. A young person stated they 'don't want to leave' the home. The welfare of young people is central to the care provided.

Staff actively seek the views of young people through frequent key work sessions. Young people are involved in day to day matters such as choosing a new television and have a budget to personalise their bedroom. As part of their independence programme they exercise choice relating to their daily lives. Staff are sensitive to young people's feelings when young people do not agree with decisions made. Staff agree on strategies to help them put forward their view while also supporting them

to take a positive approach. Young people are fully aware of the complaints process and are confident in using it. They are given the opportunity to access an advocate when required.

Young people's care plans are detailed and comprehensive and structured in line with Every Child Matters outcomes. The plan identifies young people's individual needs and sets out goals and strategies to meet these needs. These strategies, together with detailed risk assessments form the basis of guidelines for staff which are regularly updated and reviewed to provide consistent high quality care. Young people are involved in these plans and guidelines through frequent key sessions reviewing progress and addressing relevant issues. Young people also participate in monthly reviews of their progress using an assessment tool that scores their progress and enables them to see how well they are achieving. The review also enables staff to focus on particular areas to support young people.

Young people live in a healthy environment which actively promotes their physical, emotional and psychological well-being. Detailed health plans identify young people's specific health needs and support required for them to be healthy. They are registered with local healthcare services such as doctor, optician and dentist and regularly attend appointments. They also access more specialised services to support their physical, emotional, psychological and sexual health needs. Staff work proactively with other agencies such as health professionals (including CAMHS) and the police to secure positive outcomes for young people in line with their individual care plan. Young people are supported to gradually take responsibility for their own medication in accordance with individual risk assessments. A robust system for the administration of medication is in place with weekly stock checks and regular monitoring ensuring that arrangements for dealing with medication are safe and effective. Some staff have not completed First Aid training and thus there are occasions when there is no one on duty at the home with a suitable first aid qualification, which has implications for a young person if an emergency occurs.

Education is a high priority at the home and staff are proactive in supporting young people to attend education and achieve to their potential. Young people attend courses in the community and staff actively engage with tutors to ensure that young people benefit from educational opportunities. Consequently young people have excellent attendance and are making good progress in relation to their starting point. This has a positive impact on their future life chances. Young people also work within the home on Level 2 Diploma in Life and Living Skills as part of their independence programme.

Young people are offered a choice of purposeful activities in the home and local community in relation to their particular interests. They have weekly horse riding lessons, go ice-skating and have guitar lessons from a member of staff as well as going on holiday. Particular talents and interests are encouraged and young people's artwork is on the wall in the home. They are encouraged to make friends in the community and their friends are welcomed into the home.

Young people live in a comfortable family home which generally is decorated and

furnished to a good standard. Some areas show signs of deterioration but plans are in place for maintenance on these areas to be carried out.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people report they feel safe at the home and are safe. Young people are confident they can talk to staff if they feel unsafe. They do not choose to leave the home without permission and make arrangements with staff about what time they will come back. Consequently there have been no incidents of young people reported as missing. Procedures are in place for reporting young people if they do go missing but these procedures do not include the local police protocol for young people who are missing from care. Staff are sensitive to the individual needs of young people in relation to feeling safe at night and staff rotas reflect young people's individual wishes.

Comprehensive risk assessments are in place with detailed staff guidelines to protect young people and minimise the risk of harm. These positive and proactive behaviour management strategies together with clear boundaries are applied consistently by all staff and regularly reviewed. Although risk assessments identify protective factors they also allow young people to develop their independence appropriate to their age and development. Consequently young people's risk taking behaviour has significantly reduced compared to historical incidents. Specific risk assessments and strategies are in place to address particular vulnerabilities of young people which include liaison with the police and emergency services if necessary.

Physical intervention is rare and in all cases is appropriate with detailed recording. However the records do not contain specific reference to any injuries sustained or confirmation that the young person and staff have been spoken to about the restraint. Sanctions are used appropriately and are linked to the incentive scheme for promoting positive behaviour. Sanctions are recorded but do not include reference to the effectiveness of the measure or confirmation that the manager has discussed the sanction with staff and the young person.

Staff are well trained in safeguarding procedures and fully aware of the procedures for reporting any suspicions of harm to young people or allegations of harm. There have been no recent child protection referrals relating to young people at the home. Staff are aware of issues around bullying and the incidence of bullying through social networking sites. Staff work with young people to ensure their safety when using the internet and any issues are quickly dealt with by staff.

Young people's safety is protected within the home by thorough health and safety routines. All checks, including fire safety checks, are up to date. Regular fire drills are held to ensure young people are aware of the evacuation procedure. Comprehensive environmental risk assessments with action plans are in place to safeguard young people.

Robust recruitment procedures are in place to ensure the recruitment of suitable people to keep young people safe. The organisation implements rigorous vetting procedures for new staff and undertake all the required checks.

Leadership and management

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

The home is effectively and efficiently managed. The permanent manager has applied to be registered and the application is currently being processed. The manager demonstrates a capacity for continuous improvement and has a good understanding of the home's strengths and weaknesses. A development plan is in place and since the last inspection there is evidence of management systems being embedded and consolidated which are having a positive impact on outcomes for young people. The requirement at the last inspection has been acted upon and an application for the manager to register has been submitted. One complaint has been made by a young person since the last inspection and this has been dealt with effectively by the manager who has fully explained to the young person why their wishes could not be acted upon.

The Statement of Purpose is informative and accurately reflects what services the home offers. The home, through a structured and application of boundaries approach, delivers care through a continually updated care plan ensuring it meets the specific needs of the young person throughout their placement. Young people are aware of what the home can provide and staff understand the ethos of the home. A social worker supported this by stating that the home provides good support from the staff team with appropriate boundaries for young people. They added that staff undertake effective work with young people exploring the reasons behind risk taking behaviour. The home has constructive relationships with outside agencies and a social worker stated that staff are very good at keeping them informed about young people and liaising with the placing authority.

Thorough monitoring systems are in place with the manager completing weekly Regulation 34 audits with all the required matters being checked and follow up action taken if necessary. Detailed Regulation 33 Reports are provided which outline recommendations to secure improvement, for example, to follow up maintenance requests, and the manager compiles an action plan from these recommendations. All significant events are notified to the appropriate authorities and appropriate action taken following the incident. These processes demonstrate a capacity to improve which support the quality of care provided and impact positively on outcomes for young people.

Young people are supported by an enthusiastic and committed staff team. All staff are qualified to the required level or are undertaking training. New recruits complete the Children's Workforce Development Council's induction programme and are closely supervised by senior members of the team. All staff receive regular individual supervision and group clinical supervision from a qualified psychologist every six weeks. They also have three reviews a year using an assessment tool to evaluate the

impact of their support on the progress of young people. This support ensures that staff have opportunities to reflect on their practice, consider their own personal development and improve outcomes for young people. Regular staff meetings also focus on the specific needs of young people and consider new ways of working with and supporting young people. Staff report they feel well supported and receive relevant training enabling them to provide a good quality of care which impacts positively on the future life chances of young people in their care.

Record keeping is a particular strength of the home with records being clear, detailed and up to date. They present a comprehensive understanding of a young person's life with excellent identification of young people's individual needs and progress made.

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.