

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Caroline Jones
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This children's home is one of a number of homes operated by a private organisation. It is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to four young people with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: a service of exceptional quality that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

Good: a service of high quality 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**.

Young people live in a homely and supportive environment that provides planned care to meet their individual needs. Young people achieve positive outcomes in relation to their starting points, in particular to their education. They are now attending school regularly and achieving their targets. Most young people report positive relationships with staff and like living at the home and feel safe. They comment: 'I like staff they are good, I feel safe here.' Staff continue to work hard with young people new to the home to help them settle.

Staff have aspirations for young people and are committed to ensuring they succeed. Staff value the importance of gaining trusting relationships with young people and strive to build these with young people new to the home. Young people are growing in confidence and gain skills for adulthood. Some young people have lived at the home for a number of years and made successful transitions to independent living. They remain in contact with the home.

The home is managed by an experienced Registered Manager who is well aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the home. A development plan sets the direction for improvement. There are breaches of regulations and failures to meet national minimum standards; this has led to an overall judgement of adequate. These shortfalls have not impacted negatively on the current group of young people to-date.

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
5 (2001)	ensure that the Statement of Purpose is reviewed to include the persons working at the home (Regulation 5 and Schedule 1(5))	22/10/2013
16 (2001)	ensure that the registered person implements a written policy that sets out the procedure to be followed in the event of any allegation of abuse or neglect (Regulation 16(1)(b))	22/10/2013
38 (2001)	ensure that the registered person notifies in writing to Her Majesty's Chief Inspector the change in the responsible individual. (Regulation 38(e)(iii) and Regulation 6(2)(c))	22/10/2013

Recommendations

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

- ensure that the registered person's system for recruitment includes an effective system for reaching decisions as to who is to be appointed and the circumstances in which an application should be refused in light of criminal convictions or other concerns about suitability (NMS 16.5)
- ensure that records include the level of Criminal Records Bureau disclosure and the outcome of the check (NMS 16.3 b)
- ensure that young people have access to independent advocacy who they can contact directly and in private about concerns or problems (NMS 1.5)
- ensure that the child protection procedures are submitted for consideration to the Local Safeguarding Children Board and to the Local Authority Designated Officer and are consistent with local policies and procedures (20.4)
- ensure that investigations follow the framework for managing cases of allegations of abuse against people who work with children as set out in Working Together To Safeguard Children (20.8)
- ensure that staff appraisals take into account any views of young people the service is providing for (NMS 19.6)
- ensure that written records kept by the home when a young person goes missing detail the action taken by staff, the circumstances of the young person's return any reasons for running away and action taken in light of those reasons. (NMS 5.10)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people make good progress across aspects of their development, which helps them grow in confidence. Staff promote young people's independence and they are making strides in learning skills for adulthood. For example, young people are able to use public transport independently and budget their finances. Additionally young people have been equipped with skills for life and have successfully moved on to independent living.

Young people are in good health and staff promote healthy living. They take part in a range of activities including: football, swimming, martial arts, youth club and cinema trips. They are registered with a general medical practitioner, dentist and optician and have individual plans to target their health needs. Young people are educated in a variety of health and well-being matters through key working sessions. This complements young people's understanding in making informed decisions about their lives. All staff receive suitable training and have a first aid qualification to support young people effectively with their health needs.

Young people attend school regularly, which is a significant achievement for them. Education packages are individualised to ensure young people enjoy learning and reach their potential. Individual school reports highlight good progress in their behaviour and attainment. Young people also attend college and are making very good progress in-line with their peers.

Young people are growing in confidence and developing a positive self-view. This is supported by trained therapists to ensure young people understand their personal situation and background. Furthermore, young people have regular contact with their families and staff fully support this through partnership working with local authorities. This ensures that relationships are maintained and that family members remain important to young people.

Quality of care

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

Most young people enjoy very good relationships with staff who demonstrate a clear commitment to them. Clear boundaries are set and young people respond well and behave appropriately. However, for others this remains a challenge and staff continue to find strategies to ensure young people develop skills in managing their behaviour.

Young people are involved in care planning and their placement plans are tailored to meet their individual needs. Young people are actively involved in reviewing their plans to ensure their views and wishes count. Young people's views are also sought through young people's meetings and key working sessions. Although, young people have limited contact from independent advocates or visitors to ensure their voice is

heard outside of the organisation if they choose this. Young people are confident to raise a complaint and use this to resolve any dissatisfaction.

Young people live in a healthy environment where their physical, emotional and social well-being is promoted. They spend time with their friends and family and participate in hobbies and interests. They have prompt access to health care services to meet their individual needs. Additionally, young people benefit from attending therapy sessions with a trained expert in accordance with their needs.

Staff promote young people's educational needs through proactive relationships with parents and partner agencies. Young people attend educational provision regularly and make progress. Staff recognise young people's achievements in the home and celebrate these through rewards such as beauty therapy treats. These practices help young people to experience success and promote their self-worth.

Young people live in a homely environment which blends into the semi-rural residential area. They have their own bedrooms and are encouraged to personalise them to reflect their own interests and tastes. They have space and privacy to see their friends and family and to do homework. This affords respect and dignity to young people.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Staff receive safeguarding training that is refreshed and they understand their duties in promoting young people's welfare. Most young people feel safe and staff work with them individually to address any vulnerabilities and risks. The organisational child protection policy does not sufficiently detail the procedure for managing allegations against staff. Additionally, it does not reflect local and national guidance and has not been submitted to partner agencies for consideration to ensure a clear and robust response in the best interests of young people.

Young people's complex behaviours are managed through safe behaviour management techniques that all staff are trained in. There have been occasions when challenging behaviour has resulted in staff calling the police to the home and these have been notified to Ofsted. Restraints are minimal and staff are clear that this is used only as a last resort to protect young people. Sanctions are used to encourage young people's positive behaviour and any incident of bullying is promptly resolved.

Protocols with the local authority and multi-agency risk management meetings take place to develop strategies for managing the risks faced by young people missing from home. However, recording of some of these incidents are not sufficiently detailed to provide a full account of the event, for example, the details of a young person's return home.

Young people live in a home where health and safety matters are considered in

ensuring a safe, clean and secure environment. Staff carry out routine health and safety checks around the home. Safety and insurance certificates are up-to-date and regular fire drills take place to ensure young people and staff are aware of an emergency evacuation route in the event of a fire. Staff are vigilant and take appropriate steps to verify visitors' identity to ensure the safety of young people.

Recruitment processes promote the safety of young people. Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) and reference checks are all undertaken before any appointment of staff is made. These are also verified by telephone. However, file records do not identify the outcome of the CRB check or the decision making process where applicants may be appointed or refused in light of any criminal convictions, to ensure a clear and robust process.

Leadership and management

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

The home is well managed by a committed Registered Manager who provides leadership and accountability. The Statement of Purpose has not been updated to include details of staff working at the home. This means that any person requesting this will not have full and accurate details about the home to make informed decisions. Also Her Majesty's Chief Inspector has not been notified of the change in responsible individual in charge of supervising the management of the home. The Registered Manager and two deputy managers work well together to monitor young people's welfare, which ensures the quality of care.

The Registered Manager is well aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the home and has a development plan in place. For example, charts are being developed to demonstrate the progress of young people. There is a process to notify the appropriate authorities of significant events relating the protection of young people to ensure a robust response. The two recommendations from the previous inspection have been addressed and improvements are evident. Namely, independent monitoring includes the views of young people, their families and social workers and an advocate has been gained for a young person.

Staff confirm that they are well supported by their Registered Manager. Staff are suitably qualified and have a wealth of experience in working with young people. They have regular supervision, appraisals, team meetings and training opportunities that contribute to their competence in providing care to young people. Despite appraisals of staff taking place these do not include feedback from young people on staff performance to ensure their views count.

Staff sickness absence and organisational changes in staffing levels have impacted negatively on the morale of some staff. These issues are being addressed by senior management to ensure a consistent staff team for young people. Gaps in staffing have been covered by existing staff and agency staff to ensure sufficient staff numbers in meeting the needs of young people.

The home's written records are generally good and provide a picture of young people's daily living. The staff and Registered Manager take appropriate action to ensure young people's information is gained from local authorities. Young people's information is securely stored and shared confidentially to protect their safety and privacy.

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* and the evaluation schedule for the inspection of children's homes.