

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Jo Stephenson
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home is one of a group of homes operated by the same organisation as part of a tendering contract with a local council. Accommodation is provided for up to three young people.

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**.

The home provides a supportive and nurturing environment in which young people say they are happy. Young people say they have good relationships with staff. Staff are suitably experienced and able to recognise the individual needs of young people. However, young people's identified needs are not always reflected in placement plan sessions or case files. This means that positive outcomes for young people are not continually promoted.

Young people say they feel safe in the home and that their views are taken into account. The home ensures internal support plans are developed to promote education, health and welfare. Nevertheless, these plans lack detail and are not always supported by placement plan or keywork sessions. This means that plans developed by the home do not cross reference to statutory care plans. As a result, young people do not gain from an integrated approach to their care.

Staff have a sound knowledge and understanding of their responsibilities in relation to safeguarding and young people who go missing. Incidents of missing from home have significantly reduced. However, home specific processes are not consistently adhered to. Subsequently, reasons young people going missing from home are not necessarily addressed on their return. Staff encourage the development of positive behaviours through the application of boundaries and behaviour plans. This means that young people are supported to consider the impact their behaviour has on others.

The home does not have a permanent Registered Manager in post. As a result, effective and efficient monitoring of the home does not take place. This means that a number of shortfalls in records and recordings have not been identified or resolved. Consequently, this impacts on the quality of care and promotion of positive outcomes for young people.

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
27 (2001)	ensure that all persons employed receive appropriate training, supervision and appraisal (Regulation 27(4)(a))	26/10/2012
28 (2001)	maintain in respect of each child who is accommodated in a children's home a record in permanent form which includes the information documents and records specified in Schedule 3; and is signed and dated by the author of each written entry (Regulation 28(1)(a)(c))	26/10/2012
30 (2001)	ensure, if any of the events listed in schedule 5 takes place, the registered provider shall without delay notify the persons indicated in respect of the event. (Regulation 30(1))	12/10/2012

Recommendations

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

- ensure records kept by the home when a child goes missing details actions taken by staff, the circumstances of the child's return, any reasons given by the child for running away from the home, and any action taken in light of those reasons (NMS 5.10)
- ensure staff have up-to-date information about each child's educational progress (NMS 8.7)
- ensure the manager regularly monitors, in line with Regulations, all records kept by the home to ensure compliance with the home's policies (NMS 21.2)
- ensure there is a system in place to monitor the quality and adequacy of record keeping and take action when needed (NMS 22.1)
- ensure placement plan is monitored by a keyworker within in the home who ensures that a requirements of the plan are implemented in the day to day care of the child (NMS 25.2)

- ensure the home contacts placing authorities if a change in the care plan is needed or if there has been a change in arrangements for the child's care. (NMS 25.5)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

There are some good examples where young people receive personalised care that meets their individual needs. Young people's aspirations and ambitions are verbally encouraged and this gives them a sense of well-being and self-esteem. Young people say they know why they are living at the home, which helps them to understand their backgrounds and early lives. The home supports young people to reflect on their behaviour using placement plan sessions. Nevertheless, these are not consistently completed by staff. As a result, triggers to behaviour and reasons for behaviours are not comprehensively included in internal or statutory care plans. Subsequently, young people do not benefit from an integrated approach to their care.

Staff encourage young people to regularly attend their education placement and for some, their attendance has improved substantially since coming to the home. The home celebrates the educational achievements of young people and attend regular meeting with school provisions. Staff work in partnership with placing authorities, schools and specialist agencies to promote the importance of education and to identify any barriers to education. Nonetheless, not all young people have up-to-date personal education plans available to support their educational needs statements. As a result, support programmes for young people do not consider their current curriculum Key Stage.

Young people attend regular young people's meetings. Their views are sought on practical aspects of structuring activities in the home. For example, records show frequent discussions with young people regarding leisure activities. Staff encourage young people to participate in both group and individual activities and young people say this is something that they enjoy. In addition, young people say they are included in the development of the home and have been consulted on proposed changes to decorations and furnishings. As a result, young people feel involved in the home's development.

Staff are proactive in encouraging young people to sustain and further progress relationships with their families. Young people are supported to attend contact visits and staff tailor these routines around the individual needs and preferences of the young people. Young people say they recognise and appreciate the efforts made by staff in assisting them to build positive relationships with their families.

Young people are encouraged to undertake independence skills to help prepare them for their transition to adulthood. This means staff are able to identify areas that young people require additional support in, such as cooking or budgeting. Staff

encourage young people to consider the emotional impact of independent living and include this in future accommodation options. As a result, young people acquire necessary practical and emotional skills before leaving the home.

Quality of care

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

Young people enjoy generally good relationships with each other. However, they say that bullying is sometimes an issue in the home. Young people say they have very positive relationships with staff and that the home addresses any issues around bullying. As a result, young people enjoy constructive or sustainable attachments with staff.

Staff promote the importance of socially acceptable behaviour. Strategies, risk assessments and intervention plans include behavioural targets for young people. However, these plans are not always reviewed, amended or monitored on a regular basis through keywork or placement plan sessions. Young people do not consistently comment on or sign these plans and are not continually informed of the progress they have made. This means that young people are not involved in decisions made in relation to this aspect of their care. Staff share information with young people about the daily running of the home and the impact this may have on practice. Young people say they feel their views are considered and one young person said 'we get to help the staff to pick new things for the home'. As a result, young people say they influence the development of the home.

The home has a complaints procedure and all young people confirm that they understand how to raise a concern. Young people say they feel able to make complaints and are confident that these will be appropriately resolved. Records show that complaints are addressed in line with procedures and young people receive timely feedback on the issues they raise. Subsequently, young people feel their grievances are taken seriously. The home provides an independent advocate service for the young people.

Staff ensure that young people have internal placement and intervention plans available. Plans incorporate all aspects of care, including risk assessments, contact arrangements and behaviour issues. Staff provide placing authorities with opportune feedback on the progress and development made by young people. However, some statutory plans have not been updated following review meetings and the home is not proactive in ascertaining changes to care plans. This means that staff are unable to ensure the compatibility between internal plans and those devised by other professionals. Consequently, young people may not experience an integrated approach to planning their care.

Young people are encouraged to attend their education placements and staff provide practical assistance to support this. Staff work with identified education provisions to determine acceptable behaviour and maintain attendance. Nevertheless, not all young people have personal education plans to support their special educational

needs statements. As a result, young people may not benefit from a consistent approach to their education.

Young people's general health needs are met and they access all primary healthcare services, such as regular doctors, dentist and optician appointments. Staff work in partnerships with statutory and voluntary specialist health services if young people require additional support. As a result, young people benefit from a holistic approach to maintaining a physically healthy life style. The home is supported by mental health agencies that work alongside the staff team and young people. However, health records lack detail and background information pertaining to the continuing health interventions young people require. This means that young people may not receive the most relevant health services to meet their needs.

The home is suitable located and benefits from extensive park land and community facilities. The internal environment is reasonably maintained and suitably decorated. However, the home lacks a comfortable impression and does not benefit from 'family' touches such as photographs or ornaments. This is acknowledged and in the process of being addressed.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people say they feel safe but state there have been some problems with bullying previously but staff have addressed this. Staff have a sound understanding of safeguarding procedures and receive regular training to support their knowledge.

Incidents of young people missing from the home have substantially reduced. Staff ensure that young people have missing from home risk assessments and action plans in place. The home works with other agencies and local police to protect young people from exploitation. However, staff do not consistently complete missing from home records or review incidents following each absence. This means that antecedents to episodes are not always identified or evaluated. As a result, young people may not receive suitable interventions to address their vulnerabilities.

Staff implement behaviour management strategies to encourage young people to display socially acceptable behaviour. Young people can earn rewards for school attendance and achieving individual goals and targets. Staff use 'placement plan sessions' to encourage young people to consider the impact of their behaviour. The recording of sanctions clearly indicates the extent of any negative behaviour and interventions are fair and proportionate. This means that young people develop an understanding of the varied consequences to their actions.

Staff receive training in physical intervention and de-escalation techniques. Records of restraint are extremely detailed and appropriate. Young people are encouraged to comment on the reason for this intervention being used and how they feel about being restrained. Staff complete comprehensive interviews with young people following every physical restraint. Subsequently, young people are able to reflect on

their behaviour and consider alternative ways of managing their frustrations.

The home completes general risk assessments to monitor known hazards and ensure young people are kept safe from harm. These risk assessments are regularly reviewed and staff complete training in health and safety. Young people take part in regular fire drills; checks and tests of fire safety equipment are also carried out.

The service adheres to robust recruitment procedures in place to safeguard young people. Safety checks are carried out in full on all new starters. This means that young people work with suitably vetted and selected staff. Investigation into allegations or suspicions of harm are handled quickly and fairly and provide effective protection for all parties involved.

Leadership and management

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

The home does not have a permanent manager registered with Ofsted. The service has recently allocated an interim manager to be responsible for the day-to-day running of the home. This temporary manager has made significant improvements in a short time. The staff are committed, enthusiastic and motivated and the structure of the home is centred on the young people. Staff had not received regular formal supervision that supported their development or considered any additional assistance required. Although, supervisions are beginning to take place, these now need to be embedded in practice. In addition, there are gaps in the completion of mandatory and supplementary training for some staff. This means that young people may not always work with staff that are able to identify or address their needs.

The Statement of Purpose is professionally presented and details the aims and objectives of the home. It gives clear guidance on the facilities and services provided. Young people and placing authorities understand the purpose of the home and the outcomes it aspires to achieve. Young people are provided with a copy of the children's guide to the home on admission.

The home has monitoring tools in place to scrutinise the quality of care for young people and consider the impact the home has on young people's lives. Although these systems are now being used by the temporary manager, use of these system are still in their infancy and yet to be fully embedded. For example, recordings in case files and documents relating to young people are still inconsistent. Records often lack detail and signatures and are subjective in their language and assessment. As a result, records do not always contribute a young people's understanding of their life and experiences. The manager has not informed Ofsted about serious incidents about young people living at the home.

The home has identified strengths and weaknesses of the service and these are included in the development plan. Nevertheless, this have not been reviewed to ascertain or action the impact on young people of the home being without a Registered Manager.

Staff work hard with placing authorities to ensure that statutory requirements pertaining to reviews, visits and placement plans are met. Staff encourage young people to actively participate in their review meetings and this means that young people are involved in plans for their future. Nonetheless, there are some shortfalls in this area.

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.