

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Ann-Marie Born
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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.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: a service that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

Good: a service that exceeds minimum requirements

Satisfactory: a service that only meets minimum requirements

Inadequate: a service that does not meet minimum requirements

Service information

Brief description of the service

The registered provider is a limited company which operates a number of other children's homes. This setting provides up to three long-term placements for young people aged from 11 to 17 years.

Overall effectiveness

The overall effectiveness is judged to be **good**.

Young people talk positively about their experiences within the home and make good progress from their starting points. Staff have an excellent understanding of young people's individual needs and this is reflected in the sensitive way that the diverse needs of the young people are met. A youth offending team worker stated, 'they have allowed him to be himself and to grow. It's down to them he is the person he is today'.

There is a strong and committed management and leadership team who support a caring, enthusiastic staff team. However on occasions only one staff member is in the house with young people without a risk assessment in place. The manager and staff regularly review the service they offer and have clear plans to address issues identified. There is a comprehensive Statement of Purpose however there is no information regarding staff members' experience and qualifications.

Young people have access to a range of independent advocates but the details of the Children's Rights Director are not in the Children's Guide. Young people contribute to their care plans and have a range of opportunities to influence and comment upon the care they receive. They report that they feel safe and happy in the home.

Areas for improvementStatutory 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
4 (2001)	ensure that the Statement of Purpose is updated with the number, qualifications and experience of persons working at the home. (Regulation 4. Schedule 1. 5)	02/09/2011

Recommendations

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

- ensure that young people know how to contact the Children's Rights Director (NMS 1.5)
- ensure that where only one member of staff is on duty at any time, a risk assessment has been carried out and recorded in writing, identifying any likely risks to children, staff and members of the public. (NMS 17.9)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people benefit from the well planned individualised support which enables them to grow in confidence and develop a positive understanding of their background, emotional resilience and belief in their skills. The key worker system encourages young people to identify, focus and build on their abilities and goals. This is supported by the regular opportunities for discussion through one-to-one sessions, in house meetings and over mealtimes to express their views and feelings. Staff are aware of young people's strengths and help to nurture and celebrate their talents, achievements and interests. For example, they encourage young people to 'name that tune' with a young person playing the guitar, and nominate all of the young people to be Olympic torch bearers.

There is a good approach to promoting the physical and emotional well-being of young people. Their health plans clearly identify their specific needs and they regularly visit their general practitioner, dentist and optician. Regular contact is maintained with the child and adolescent mental health services and contact is made with specialist agencies, for example the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender group. There is good preventative work undertaken regarding substance misuse. Young people lead an active lifestyle including regular walking and games of tennis.

Records show that good education plans are in place and the home recognises that not all young people are able to attend mainstream schools. Educational support is then provided within the home with the support of the educational authorities. Participation in educational activities is encouraged and young people can earn points towards monetary rewards if they attend classes, school or college. However, not all young people are availing themselves of this opportunity and therefore not achieving their full potential.

Young people receive consistent support to develop independent living skills and are assisted in being able to plan, prepare and cook light meals. They are developing and maintaining good personal hygiene and extra reward points can be earned for

those young people whose care plans have identified that this may be a problem. Good transition programmes are constantly reviewed to reflect young people's achievements or need to re-start a process. A social worker stated, 'they have given him the childhood he was robbed of and they have given him a future with a grounding he will need as a young adult'.

Young people benefit from positive contact with family members in accordance with their care plans and as appropriate. A parent said, 'they keep in contact with me, the boundaries are working for him and he's much better than he was. They've done that with him'.

Quality of care

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

Young people thrive within the nurturing and supportive environment provided by the caring, committed and professional staff team. A staff member stated 'young people need a loving environment, firm boundaries and to have fun as well. We give them that here'. The Every Child Matters outcomes form the basis of the comprehensive care planning system. Consistent, robust monitoring enables staff to evaluate progress on a monthly basis. This systematic process effectively contributes to statutory reviews. A youth offending team worker stated, 'they are so efficient, always prepare really comprehensive reports for every meeting'.

Relationships between young people and staff is constructive and close although boundaries are tested on occasion. The warm, efficient, manager and staff have an excellent awareness of the dynamics of relationships and the need to maintain professional boundaries. A young person said, 'she's not just my carer, she's my best friend'. Young people know how to express any complaints they may have but they have not made any. Young people are making good progress from their starting points. One young person said 'it has been a good experience for me here but I am now ready to go home'.

Young people's wishes and feelings are actively sought in the weekly house meetings and through their key worker sessions. Their comprehensive files provide an excellent record of staff intervention and young people are able to comment on the information written about them. Resourceful and enthusiastic staff members routinely consult young people on all aspects of their care including the points reward system, goal planning and activities. There is a strong culture of promoting young people's rights. A social worker stated 'he has been offered more opportunities and felt more secure than at any other time in his life'.

Staff promote a healthy lifestyle and encourage and support young people to become involved in a range of activities within the local community. For example, they have daily opportunities to play tennis at a local court. In addition, all of the young people have contributed to the planning for the summer holiday activities. This enables them to have choice as to one-to-one time as well as group activities. Young people are able to plan their own weekly menus and enjoy the opportunity to cook and eat

good nutritional home-made meals. Themed nights introduce young people to foods from different cultures and they have one 'take-away' night a week. A parent said 'No concerns about the care of him at all. He's well fed and given lots of activities'.

Needs relating to young people's personal identity, cultural background and sexual orientation are comprehensively identified in their care planning and positively promoted in their daily living. A youth offending team worker stated, 'he was so oppressed before he came here and now he's able to be himself, they have allowed him to be the person he is today. They talk to him and praise him and listen to him. I have nothing but praise for them'. Young people are empowered and encouraged by positive role modelling from staff members to identify and address inappropriate language. A young person said 'in this house you can't say anything bad about someone who is a different colour, religion or sexuality, the staff are straight on to you. Then you know why it's wrong and what is right to say'.

Young people live in a terraced house in a residential neighbourhood. The accommodation consists of three single bedrooms and staff sleep-in facilities. There are communal areas for eating, studying and relaxing. The property blends in with the neighbourhood and resembles a family home. A young person said, 'you come here and it's just a normal home, not like a care home, its being at home'. The young people each have their own bedroom that they can decorate and personalise to their taste. All bedrooms and bathroom and toilet are lockable to preserve their privacy and dignity but can be opened from outside in case of emergency. Young people can relax in the comfortable lounge television room. The home's computer is located in the large dining room where young people also store and use their musical instruments. Young people, staff and visitors eat lunchtime and evening meals together around the dining table which promotes conversation, opportunities to hear young people's views and builds social and life skills. A youth offending team worker stated 'this is the only care place I've been in that is a home'.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

There are good arrangements in place to safeguard young people. One young person said, 'any kid that moved here would be safe here'. Care plans and risk assessments are robust, comprehensive, individualised and clearly identify the risks and protective factors for each young person. Staff receive regular training which focuses on the protection and welfare of young people and are aware of the home's whistle blowing procedures. The home's procedures have not been sent to the local safeguarding children board for approval but this does not adversely affect the young people's safety. The organisation's procedures are in the process of being updated and all staff will be attending further training on the new procedures in September this year. All disclosures and any allegations are acted upon promptly and referred to the appropriate authorities. Young people are therefore effectively and consistently safeguarded.

Positive behaviour is encouraged and promoted by positive example and the rewards

system. Young people can earn positive consequences monies for behaviours such as attending school regularly, maintaining personal hygiene and positive behaviours within the home. One young person amassed £114 in five months using this system which he was extremely proud of. Inappropriate and aggressive behaviours are challenged immediately and can result in loss of planned rewards, for example, an evening cinema visit, and sanctions. However, young people sometimes exhibit intimidating behaviour towards staff members.

Young people are encouraged to comment in writing on both the rewards they receive and the sanctions. The comments have included, 'why thank you' and 'I think my sanction is fair'. Young people do not report any issues of bullying within the home. Residents meetings are used to praise young people as a group for positive behaviours and this is recorded, for example 'a big well done for excellent behaviour over the last couple of days'. All staff members are trained in the use of restraint techniques and the young people's care plans detail what form can be used in their case. Following an episode of restraint young people are given the opportunity see a medical practitioner, speak with their social worker and to comment in writing on the restraint. The manager monitors the use of physical intervention and records her views on its efficacy. Young people are rewarded when the need for restraint is reduced or ceases and it is recorded as an area of success.

The home's missing children policy is compatible with and has regard to the Runaway and Missing from Home and Care protocols maintained and managed by the local safeguarding children board and the police. Staff do all they can to locate a young person when they go missing. A young person said, 'they're straight out looking for you. They call the police but they still keep looking for you, even staff that are not on will come in and look, they came out to look for me, they leave staff here to look after the other kids but everyone else is out looking'. Young people are responded to positively on their return and offered the opportunity to speak with their social worker and other independent advocates if they wish. Their reasons for being missing and any other concerns are comprehensively recorded on their return. A youth offending worker said, 'he has only been missing twice since he's been here and he came back himself, before that he had to be found by the police'.

Young people are safeguarded by the comprehensive recruitment and vetting systems that ensure that the correct calibre of staff are appointed.

Robust risk management systems are in place for general building and fire safety and shared activities. Staff address the particular vulnerabilities relating to each young person in their individual risk assessments. These highlight behaviour management issues such as physical aggression to staff and other young people or sexualised behaviour as well as practical physical activities. Staff endeavour to minimise risks and provide a safe environment by regularly reviewing risk assessments and ensuring that information is shared with each other.

There are weekly checks of the fire alarm, smoke detectors and emergency lighting systems. Staff and young people participate in regular fire drills at different times of the day and night. Professional technicians routinely complete safety checks on all

fire appliances, electrical equipment and gas installations. All visitors to the building are monitored and have the fire system explained to them. Young people, staff and visitors are effectively safeguarded by these measures. A parent said, 'it's most important to me to know that my son is safe and secure and I trust them completely and know he's safe there'.

Leadership and management

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

The provider meets the aims in the home's Statement of Purpose document which is comprehensive and accessible. This allows young people, parents, placing authorities and staff to understand the aims and objectives of the home and the services provided. It acknowledges that 'each young person is recognised as unique with specific needs & beliefs that require individual assessment & planning' and includes the commitment to meet cultural and religious observances. It also gives details of special provisions that will be made for cultural, language and religious needs of any unaccompanied asylum seekers placed in the home. However, the document is not available in any other language. Names of staff members are included but there is no information regarding their past experience or qualifications.

The Children's Guide is individualised for young people with details of who their key workers are and contact numbers for their social workers and other professionals they are involved with. It has a comprehensive range of questions and answers to fully inform a young person of what they can expect when they move in to the home. This is further supplemented by a DVD produced by young people accommodated within homes in the organisation. The guide is bright, colourful and user friendly with a range of useful contact numbers. These include Ofsted, a local children's rights advocacy service and lesbian and gay helplines but it does not have the details of the Children's Rights Director.

Young people benefit from the appointment of staff from diverse backgrounds and the focused one to one and key worker sessions. The committed and motivated staff team receive strong staff support and a good formal supervision process. However, there are occasions when there are two members of staff on duty with three young people. If one member of staff takes a young person out on an activity only one member of staff is on duty within the home. This may not be appropriate or sufficient and is not in accordance with the Statement of Purpose.

The organisation demonstrates a commitment to national vocational training and staff also undertake training on a variety of diverse topics which address the needs of young people. A comprehensive training programme is in place which will ensure that all staff have addressed all outstanding training needs by the end of this year. The manager has attended further training with the local safeguarding children board on safeguarding children and young people and training for trainers. A member of staff said, 'it's great working here. There is always training, there's always room for improvement and everybody's really supportive'.

Staff understand young people's individual strengths and needs and the promotion of equality and diversity is good. There is a commitment to anti-discriminatory practice and young people receive encouragement to fulfil their potential. Consistent working practices focus on enhancing young people's quality of life and they receive support to develop a positive identity and take pride in themselves. Staff effectively support young people's cultural needs and any concerns they have regarding their sexuality.

All requirements and recommendations made at the last inspection have been addressed. The completion of written records is much improved and relevant and necessary information is recorded following any complaint, restraint, sanction or if a young person goes missing from the home. Risk assessments are comprehensive and record whether the severity of the risk is low, medium or high. All staff either have a National Vocational Qualification at level 3 or are enrolled on a diploma course. The use of 'seated double embrace' restraint is not being used within this home or the organisation as a whole and a clear direction to this is visible to all staff members on the office wall.

Young people's records are clear, comprehensively contribute to an understanding of their lives, updated daily and are stored securely.

Young people benefit from the effective management offered by the caring and professional manager and deputy manager. The manager has incorporated the new national minimum standards and amended regulations information into all systems used to record and monitor the quality of care. The company's policies and procedures are in the process of being updated and training is arranged for all staff on the updated version. There are various systems to monitor the quality of care including monthly visits in accordance with regulations by a designated visitor. In addition records show that the manager audits all records monthly and comments on the efficacy of any decision.

Young people have a particularly strong, trusting relationship with the manager who knows them well. The management structure is strengthened by the experience and support of the deputy manager which provides clear accountability and leadership.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.