

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Chris Scully
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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 home provides care for up to four young people aged 10 to 17 years, who may experience emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Overall effectiveness

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

This is a good home. There is a positive atmosphere in the home, staff work well together as a team and are well supported by the managers. Most staff hold an appropriate child care qualification. Young peoples needs are very well met because of good planning systems and relationships with placing authorities. Young people have positive relationships with staff that are built upon trust. They enjoy the company of staff and take part in activities, such as martial arts with them. Young people feel safe and are safe due to the effective safeguarding practices. Young people have a say in how the home is organised, such as choosing to move bedrooms and suggesting new activities.

There are some shortfalls with regards to the maintenance of the home and risk assessments not covering all aspects of the home which impact upon the safety of young people. Records and documentation are well maintained and contribute well to the ongoing care and support young people receive. There are minor issues with consistency in some records.

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
31 (2001)	ensure that all parts of the home used by children are suitably furnished and equipped and are reasonably maintained. In particular damaged furniture, carpets and kitchen units are repaired and maintained)Regulation 31 (2) (d) (e))	02/06/2011

Recommendations

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

- ensure the full name of each young person is recorded within all records and ensure there is a consistent approach to the recording of any sanctions (NMS22.4)
- ensure the risk assessments of the home cover the whole environment, are individualised to meet the needs of the young person and are reviewed at regular intervals, in particular the placement of televisions in bedrooms and young people holding keys to their bedrooms (NMS 10.8)
- ensure all existing staff employed prior to April 2011, hold as a minimum a level 3 qualification or are working towards one (NMS 18.5)
- ensure the homes procedures should a child be missing are compatible with and have regard to Runaway and Missing from the Home and Care protocols and procedures managed by the police or local authority. (NMS 5.6)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people's health needs are very well met. Young people are able to choose whether to attend health care appointments such as the doctors alone or with a member of staff. Young people are effectively supported by a range of health care services which meet their individual needs. This means young people are able to make informed choices about issues relating to their mental health and smoking cessation.

Young people are engaged in a range of learning opportunities through school and alternative placements. This means young people are able to achieve and engage in educative programmes that best fit their needs. Young people say that although they do not like school they do go as they realise it is important. Nevertheless they feel they are doing well and are attending placements on a regular basis. The homes routines effectively support young people to arrive at school or placements on time. As a result young people are engaging in their education and make as much progress as possible in line with their starting points. Young people are involved in a range of activities of their choosing within the community such as dance, drama, martial arts and attending local gyms. Consequently, young people are able to maintain friendships within the community and develop their own skills and interests.

All young people benefit from good levels of contact with their family and friends, which means they sustain effective links with them. Contact is carefully facilitated by staff who are very aware of the young people's individual needs. Young people are able to make private calls from the office or by their own mobile telephone. This enables them to keep in close contact with family and people who are important to them. Staff effectively support contact with young people's families and have positive relationships with them. This means they are able to discuss issues with the families and keep them informed of the young person's time with them.

Young people learn independence skills, such as budgeting and doing their laundry at their own pace. They are encouraged to open bank accounts and to manage their own money. Tasks such as purchasing new clothing help them to develop budgeting skills, for example, saving for summer clothes. As a result young people are well prepared for adult life.

Quality of care

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

All young people are registered with the appropriate health care professionals and are actively encouraged to attend their appointments. Staff are aware of young people's individual health care needs and provide good support. For example, young people are encouraged to have appropriate hygiene routines and eat healthily. Placement plans provide a clear picture of each young person's needs and how these are to be met in practice. Staff seek the support of outside agencies which ensures young people have additional help and support to help them with specific issues, for example, giving up smoking and drug cessation. Young people enjoy a range of healthy meals and snacks, which are freshly prepared by staff. Young people are encouraged to contribute to the creation of menus, which enables them to have a say in the food provided. Young people enjoy trying foods from different countries through cultural evenings.

Young people benefit from a competent and able staff team who genuinely care about the young people in the home. Young people build positive relationships with staff and engage in friendly conversations with them. These positive relationships enable young people to feel safe in their care. Staff are committed to encouraging young people's education and consult with them to ensure they are receiving all the support they need to achieve. Young people are positive about the care they received and state that staff are 'ok' and 'great'. They say staff are good at helping them to get up for school. Clear rules and boundaries are in place, although some young people comment that they do not think all of the rules are fair. For example, not having a television in their bedroom. A risk assessment of the potential dangers and possible solutions to having a television in the room has not been conducted. As a result the removal of the television appears unfair to some young people. Similarly individual risk assessments have not been conducted for young people having a key to their bedroom door. This is a generalized decision, which is not based upon the individuals needs and circumstances.

Clear behaviour management procedures means there has only been one incident of physical restraint of a young person in the last year. Young people generally behave well and when they behave inappropriately the consequences are fair. Young people are encouraged to comment upon any consequences imposed upon them as a result of inappropriate behaviour. This enables them to consider their behaviour and how this may be modified. Young people say that they have agreed with what was said to them and acknowledge that they should try to keep themselves safe. This has a positive impact upon the way young people see themselves and enables them to develop coping strategies to manage their own behaviour. Young people know how to make a complaint. They confidently explain they know how to make complaints and have done so in the past. Though they acknowledge that while they have not always got the outcome that they wanted, staff have explained the reasons why. Social worker's confirm that young people are confident to raise any issues with them about the home. These are quickly and satisfactorily resolved in consultation with the home and young person. As a result young people feel listened to and valued.

Effective care planning means young people's needs are met very well. Their individual needs, such as wishing to be placed closer to family members and the

ability to attend certain courses, are carefully considered. Plans include information relating to the individual's race, culture, gender, disability and religious needs. As a result young people's individuality is recognised and acknowledged. Young people represent themselves at case reviews and put their point of view across. Regular young people's meeting means young people have a say in what is happening within the home. They are confident to suggest ideas for new activities, such as visiting theme parks and are keen to start the photography project for the games room. Weekly quiz nights enhance young people's learning and they are keen to set the quiz topics. The young people have selected an eclectic range of subjects, which include; sports cars, the science of surveillance, sharks and pop stars. This means every young person can select a topic and has been able to effectively enhance their understanding of new subjects, technology and world around them. Young people are actively encouraged to attend interviews for new placements and all staff praise them for their achievements. This effectively fosters their self-esteem and ensuing discussions enable them to make informed choices about how the course can influence future life choices. Good relationships with schools means staff are able to effectively support young people's education. For example, staff ensure young people are in school on time for their exams and help them with revision strategies. As a result young people feel supported and make progress in education.

The home provides pleasant, warm accommodation. Furnishings and décor are of a generally good standard, although young people's bedrooms feel sparse, the bedding does not match and are all painted the same colour. Young people say their bedrooms are 'ok'. Their bedrooms however do not reflect the young people's character as they are all painted the same colour and lack personalisation. Communal areas, such as the games room are well used by the young people and have some posters, which reflect different cultures. The home is appropriately secure to prevent unwanted visitors gaining access to the premises. All visitors are required to sign in and out of the property and are supervised well by staff during their visit.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people are safeguarded because staff have a secure understanding of child protection procedures and know how to keep young people safe. Staff receive regular training in safeguarding, as a result demonstrate a sound understanding of the action to take should they have any concerns about a young person's safety or well-being. This is supported by the clear risk assessments that help staff keep young people safe when away from the home. Positive behaviour is actively encouraged through praise and rewards. Staff provide clear explanations to young people as to why their behaviour is not appropriate and the opportunity to reconsider their actions. Staff actively discourage bullying to keep young people safe. Staff are aware of the potential for bullying. They ensure young people are appropriately supervised within the home and effectively tackle any incidents.

Young people are encouraged to keep themselves safe. Staff talk to them about not engaging in inappropriate activities and the possible consequences of this, such as the impact on their health and future life opportunities. Young people are encouraged to keep themselves safe when out in the community, for example, by letting staff know where they are. The home has a positive relationship with the local police who discuss issues with young people and help them to consider other ways in which to behave.

Young people do go missing from the home. Procedures are in place and are quickly activated to ensure a young person returns home. However, there is confusion as to when or if staff would actively search for the young person in the community and protocols do not appear to have been agreed with the police in line with current legislation. This has minimal impact due to the positive relationship with the police and the fact that young people quickly return home. Young people are welcomed back by all staff and are later spoken to regarding the potential danger they place themselves under by going missing. This enables young people to consider the consequences of their actions.

The home is mainly safe and well maintained. However, some risks relating to the building have not been effectively identified nor minimised. For example; the broken cupboard door over the refrigerator in the kitchen, the damage to the dining table, the worn carpet at the top of the stairs which is a tripping hazard, the broken shower rail in the young person's bathroom, and the damaged furniture in some bedrooms. These issues impact upon the safety of young people, staff and visitors to the home. Health and safety check on appliances are up to date. Young people and staff are aware of the fire evacuation procedures, which mean they are able to evacuate quickly from the building in an emergency.

There are safe recruitment procedures within the home. New staff are suitably vetted and are unable to start working with young people until all of their checks are back.

Leadership and management

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

Young people live in a well managed home. The enthusiastic and newly appointed Registered Manager has many plans for the future, which they feel will enhance the care provided to young people. Some, such as increasing the opportunities to consult with them, have already been implemented. For example, young people are currently being consulted about the new children's guide, their views are being sought as to how this can be improved and become more user friendly.

The home has addressed the issues raised at the previous inspection; which include improving the recording of complaints, staff files holding photographic identification and adequate dining furniture. As a result recording and recruitment procedures are more robust and young people eat their meals at the dining table. Records and documentation are well maintained and provide a clear picture of each young person's life, their individual needs and how these are being met. There are minor shortfalls in the consistency of the recording of sanctions and young people's initials are used in records rather than their full name. This can lead to confusion when two young people have the same initials.

Staff work well together as a team providing good care and support to young people. The majority of staff hold an appropriate qualification. However, some staff employed prior to April 2011 do not yet hold a level three qualification in child care and have not yet commenced a training course to achieve this. Nevertheless they have a range of skills and expertise, which means they work well with young people. Staff state they are very well supported by the managers and feel confident to talk to them about any concerns they may have. All staff have equal access to training courses and their training is up to date, including in safeguarding.

The Statement of Purpose and current children's guide provide ample information to placing authorities and young people about the type of care and service they can expect to receive from the home. Consequently the home continues to meet the aim and objectives within its Statement of Purpose.

Staff receive regular supervision sessions which clearly identify their training needs and how these are to be met, such as embedding the new minimum standards. Staff say they are well supported by the managers and have opportunities to access a range of training courses. Staffing levels effectively meet the needs of the young people. This means young people receive good levels of supervision at all times which helps them to feel safe.

Systems for monitoring practice and records are managed well. Regulation 33 and Regulation 34 visits are carried out monthly by the registered individual and Registered Manager and these contribute well to the ongoing development of the home. Staff and young people are consulted at both visits and the views are recorded and acted upon. For example, one young person was advised to speak with their social worker regarding an extension to their curfew. Reports of these visits are available to staff and are discussed at team meetings. Staff and managers ensure Ofsted and other agencies are informed of all serious events involving young people which promote transparency and good working practices.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.