

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Diana Waters
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home is run by a private company that runs other children's homes in the surrounding areas. It is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to three children, who have 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**.

While the home has overall had a history of providing a good quality of care to young people it was experiencing a period of disruption. This was due to young people not being in education or employment and some behaviour management issues for some young people. The manager had recognised these issues and reviews had taken place and moving on plans were being developed. The commitment of a stable staff team to see young people through transitional arrangements were strong and difficulties managed to maximise the strength of relationships with a known and trusted staff team.

Taking into account starting points young people have made good progress across many aspects of their welfare and development, however recent dips in progress have not been fully explored with appropriate professional help. The strength of support offered to young people from dedicated staff has not diminished.

Young people are safe in the home and the breeches of regulation and standards identified in this report are being addressed. The home, while generally well maintained, has not consistently repaired all damage to the fabric and furnishings or ensured fire equipment is replaced quickly. School attendance is not regular enough and there have been too many recent episodes of young people going missing.

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
18 (2001)	promote educational achievement, in particular through regular attendance at school (Regulation 18 (1)(b))	30/06/2013
32 (2001)	ensure there are adequate precautions against the risk of fire, specifically smoke detectors and fire exits. (Regulation 32(1)(a) and (b))	30/06/2013

Recommendations

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

- ensure young people are encouraged to have their views recorded following and sanctions, disciplinary measures or restraint (NMS 3.18)
- ensure that care and support provided to children minimises the risk that they will go missing (NMS 5.1)
- ensure young people receive prompt access, and staff receive guidance and training, on psychological health issues (NMS 6.4 and 6.8)
- ensure that young people live in a home that is well maintained and decorated and damage is repaired quickly. (NMS 10.3)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **adequate**.

Taking in to account starting points at the time of their placements, young people have achieved some good outcomes

Young people make good progress in developing a positive identity, self-esteem and knowledge and understanding of their background, complex situations are handled sensitively. A placing social worker stated, 'They (the staff) have really pulled out the stops and act in a careful and considered way to meet the needs of young people.' Some young people have re-established relationships with family and young people have been assisted to build a positive sense of identity.

Young people's physical needs are well met, young people make choices about their own health needs and risks to health are discussed well. Young people are supported to reduce health risks when they feel ready to engage. Psychological help is not so

readily accepted and staff have limited access to advice from professionals, this was quickly addressed at inspection by the manager.

Young people are able to actively express their views, and they are confident that their voices are heard and taken into account about important decisions in their lives and in the general running of the home.

Educational and employment attendance and attainment had previously been good, however, recently there has been some disruption which had not been satisfactorily addressed at the time of the inspection. The majority of young people were not regularly attending school, college or employment. Discussions between education providers, social workers, family, young people and the staff team had taken place and the underlying issues were being addressed.

Young people engage in community activities. Young people confirm they are enabled to participate in activities they are interested in. Young people feel able to invite friends into the home and are able to mix in the local community and make their own choices about friendships. Staff endeavour to guide wise choices and provide support and encouragement to promote positive outcomes.

Quality of care

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

Staff actively promote young people's welfare and young people recognise the commitment of staff to provide consistent warm and caring relationships. Young people have improved relationships with family as a consequence of strategies and support offered by staff. Parents and placing social workers are positive about support provided to young people and commented:

'It is clear they know and care for my young person well, previous concerns did not emerge until recently, but excellent relationships sustain the young person.'

'They are great, they communicate well and I have no concerns, they are very easy to talk to.'

Young people said:, 'I really like it here and the staff really help me. '; 'I like it here the staff really care. '; 'It's the best home I have been in.'

The home has a reward scheme which young people understand and they benefit from individualised targets. Unacceptable behaviour is fairly sanctioned and restorative justice is used when possible.

Young people readily express their views on the running of the home, they confirm they have ready access to the home's manager and understand how to complain to a variety of people. When young people do raise concerns they are appropriately addressed.

Young people are fully involved in their own placement plans and reviews of their care.

Staff encourage young people to attend education or employment, when this is not successful they try to overcome the barriers by accessing alternative provision. However, the current level of attendance and reason for refusal has not been quickly addressed.

Services to promote physical, emotional and psychological support are offered, however sufficient emphasis has not always been given to enabling and empowering staff to quickly provide targeted assistance to young people whose behavioural issues cause concern. Access to psychological support was quickly put in place following the inspection visit.

The home enjoys good relationships with neighbours and within the local community. In most aspects the home is well maintained and a programme of improvement is undertaken. New carpets and furniture in the lounge provide a homely environment, however damage caused to some bedrooms by young people has not been repaired promptly, some external windows require cleaning and gate furniture awaits repair. The home's philosophy of engaging young people in the repair of damage and involvement with the construction of furniture is consistent with restorative justice, however, when this is not successful, damage is not repaired quickly enough. Staff have made improvements to the physical environment with the recent decoration of the bathroom, however more improvements are scheduled for attention by the care staff.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

The staff team actively promote young people's welfare through positive strategies; restraint is rarely used. Staff use individualised management systems and promote positive behaviour between themselves, family members and friends and between young people. Social workers commented 'Young people feel safe, they have been amazing, there is excellent communication and my young person has blossomed despite the recent dip.'

A reward scheme is clearly understood and sanctions are fairly administered. Both are well recorded although the absence of young people's comments within this make it difficult to determine/ascertain their views. In discussion young people said they felt fairly treated.

Young people report they feel safe within the home. Each young person's placement plans includes updated risk assessments and behaviour management strategies are regularly reviewed, these are not always effective. However, excellent relationships with staff enable young people to communicate well with staff when they wish.

Since the last inspection some young people have been reported missing and have

been missing numerous times, the suitability of the placement has been the subject of meetings. Protocols and communication with police are proactive and positive. Staff's commitment to maintain established placements and provide a safe haven for vulnerable young people, despite the difficulties are commended. Young people frequently remain in touch with staff when absent and staff respond positively to returning young people. Liaison with safeguarding professionals remain good and help to support and promote young people's safety.

There have been no new staff appointments to the home since the last inspection and the manager reports agency staff are rarely used.

The home's physical environment is generally good and safety checks are regularly conducted and checked by the manager and during monitoring visits. Communal living areas have been and are being upgraded, however as older young people take more responsibility for their own bedrooms, repairs to damage are not quickly completed. Fire checks are regularly undertaken, however the easy removal of a bedroom smoke detector and self-closing doors with Yale locks potentially pose a hazard. The manager is liaising with the fire authorities to resolve these issues.

Leadership and management

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

This is a well-managed home. It has a clear up to date Statement of Purpose and young people receive a young person's guide.

Staff numbers have remained stable and details of their experience and qualifications are included in the Statement of Purpose. The staff team are predominantly female, with only one male member of staff at present, which limits the presence of positive male role models for young people. Staff do provide young people with continuity of care by covering colleagues absences and no agency staff have been used since the last inspection.

Staff are able to access some training, however a wider range and easier accessibility to venues for training were identified as areas for improvement. Most staff have attained a level 3 qualification in caring for young people; there are regular supervision and team meetings, in addition to an open-door management style which provides staff with good support.

The (recently appointed) home's manager has the skills and experience to lead an effective team and generally deliver a good quality of care. Young people are constantly consulted about the service and their views are welcomed. and

The home has regular in depth visits from the provider, these visits together with oversight by the manager ensure the quality of care provided by the service is regularly reviewed and improvements are made when needed, this helps to promote the welfare of young people. There were no requirements or recommendations from the last inspection, and the home has a history of prompt action to rectify identified

areas for improvement. Young people were observed in discussion with the visitor and shared their views readily. Young people confirm they feel valued and are given opportunities to develop, they also confirm they do not always make wise choices but staff continue to support, care and challenge them despite setbacks and this gives them the resilience and confidence to believe in themselves.

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.