

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Alicea Churchward
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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

This is a privately owned children's home that provides care and accommodation for up to four young people of either gender aged from 8 to 16 years. There is a focus on meeting the needs of young people with behavioural and emotional difficulties through holistic care planning and individual support. The home works together with parents, professionals and external services to meet the needs of young people.

Overall effectiveness

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

This is a good service because the home provides personalised and very well-planned care to individual young people. Outcomes for the many of the young people placed are excellent; taking into account the starting point at the time of their admission to the home.

Young people have achieved placement stability. Staff are aware of the backgrounds of individual young people and know them well. They are clear about safeguarding the welfare of young people and promoting the best possible outcomes. However, there are improvements required in certain areas; these have impacted upon the inspection judgement which has changed from outstanding to good.

Young people speak very positively about the staff. The best things about the home young people said are 'the staff spending time with us ... staff leave the files until after we have gone to bed ... they are brilliant ... living here is mint ... staff are nice and caring ... they are very good with us ... they listen to you'. Also 'trips ... holidays ... I really like the way the home is run.'

Placing social workers report favourably about the home and the service offered to young people. They said that the young people's safety is promoted, placement stability has been achieved and that staff work well with the complex needs of individual young people. One social worker said 'I would recommend this home to other colleagues'.

Young people, however said they would like some changes to improve their care experience and that they are happy to remain in the home, that they feel safe and that there is no bullying; but that they would like the 'bickering, stirring and arguing' to stop.

Some refurbishment and maintenance is required to improve the overall appearance of the home.

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
30 (2001)	ensure, if any of the events listed in column 1 of the table in Schedule 5 takes place, the persons indicated in respect of the event in column 2 of the table are notified without delay; in particular ensure Ofsted is kept informed of those events (Regulation 30 (1) and Schedule 5)	31/08/2011
17 (2001)	ensure that all sanctions used in the home are reflected in the behaviour management policy (Regulation 17B (1))(a))	31/08/2011
17 (2001)	ensure that no measure of discipline is excessive or unreasonable; in this case the removal of mobile telephones; young people have access to telephone help lines; and young people have access to electricity in their rooms (Regulation 17 (2)(c)(iv))	31/07/2011
22 (2001)	ensure that where monitoring devices and CCTV are used that child's placing authority consents to the use of the measure in question, it is included in the placement plans, children and young people are consulted about it (Regulation 22 (a)(b)(c)(d))	30/09/2011
15 (2001)	ensure that children accommodated in the home are provided at all reasonable times with access to a telephone on which to make and receive telephone calls in private; which they may use without reference to persons working in the home (Regulation 15 (4)(a))	31/08/2011
33 (2001)	ensure that Regulation 33 visits indicate whether or not young people and staff are interviewed in private. (Regulation 33 (4)(a))	31/08/2011

Recommendations

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

- obtain copies of the young people's pathway plans (NMS 12.2)
- ensure that young people communicate their views on all aspects of their care and support; in this case any feelings of isolation or exclusion as a result of the behaviour of other young people living in the home (NMS 1.3)

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- ensure that young people enjoy sound relationships and interact positively with others (NMS 3)
 - ensure that the children's guide includes how a child can contact their Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) and the Children's Rights Director (NMS 13.5)
 - ensure that the home provides a comfortable and homely environment and is well maintained and decorated including; refurbish or repair furniture in the home including bedroom furniture, the suite in the lounge, removal of rubbish from the garden areas, any cracks or holes in plaster work, repainting of radiators where necessary (NMS 10.3)
 - ensure that young people can take up issues in the most appropriate way with support; without fear that this will result in any adverse consequences and that they receive prompt feedback on any concerns or complaints raised and are kept informed of progress (NMS 1.6)
 - ensure that the home has a written development plan (NMS 15.2)
 - ensure that the training programme includes training for staff about statutory guidance to keep them up to date with professional and legal developments. (NMS 18.1)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Staff work very well with young people and partners to ensure that young people develop a positive self view, emotional resilience and knowledge and understanding of their background and confidence in their skills. Young people report positively about the work undertaken, each young person also has an individual memory box to keep their possessions. This helps young people to have an understanding of their backgrounds and develop their identity. Activities within the home are chosen by young people, this enables young people to develop a positive self view. These also assist in building confidence in their skills.

Young people's physical, emotional and social development needs are promoted exceptionally well. They have healthy diets and are encouraged to lead healthy lifestyles. They have access to a wide variety of services and support to enable them to do this. The home maintains records of all health appointments and assessments. Social workers say that young people are supported with any areas of difficulty for example; going to the dentist. In addition the home has provided support in accessing sexual health services and promoting healthy eating.

The educational achievement of young people in most cases is remarkable, taking into account young people's attainment and their progress from their starting point at the time of placement. Attendance has been sporadic, for some but young people attending mainstream schools their achievement is at least comparable with their peers. The home has pursued tutorial support, they facilitate transport and support young people with their learning.

Young people are encouraged to pursue individual interests and hobbies. This includes taking part in a range of activities, including leisure activities and trips. Young people devise their activity plans for the week these include attending youth club, doing arts and crafts, baking, badminton, football and playing on active gamesole games. Young people actively engage in these plans and the activities that they have chosen and say they like spending time with the staff in the home.

Young people also have day trips and a holiday abroad is planned in coming weeks. Staff have worked hard to ensure that young people have passports so that they can all go together.

Young people are encouraged to be courteous to their neighbours and the home has received some favourable feedback from the local police and visitors to the home about the behaviour of the young people.

Contact arrangements are excellent young people are benefiting from appropriate contact with family, friends and other people who are important to them. Where there are restrictions placed upon contact these are clearly identified within individual placement plans. These are clearly followed to safeguard and promote the welfare of individual young people.

Young people are being well prepared for a successful transition to independence and adult life. Staff work closely with the young people's social workers to contribute to the development of the pathway plans. However, staff do not have access to the

pathway plans, which are currently with the placing social workers. The home maintains independence files for each young person. Staff undertake work with the young people to develop their skills to live independently. Young people and placing social workers report positively about the work they done. Young people have undertaken 'independence week' which they enjoyed budgeting planning and shopping for their own meals. Young people have savings accounts and save on a weekly basis.

Quality of care

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

Young people enjoy positive and constructive relationships with staff. Staff report that relationships between young people are usually good. Young people report that there is some 'stirring and bickering' and this can have an impact upon their daily living experience. Some young people say that they would like the manager to sort out issues causing problems within the group of young people and look at some of the rules. Young people behave appropriately, staff regularly re-enforce expectations and suitable standards of behaviour are encouraged and rewarded. There is a lot of evidence of work that is undertaken with staff and other professionals on an individual basis with the young people, however there is little evidence that these matters are discussed as a group for example in young people's meetings.

Young people feel that their views, wishes and feelings are actively sought this includes obtaining the views of the young person, family (where appropriate), social worker and Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) through statutory reviews. Some young people say that they have not always made views known in the past and provided information about the overall running of the home. They agree that these issues can be raised with the manager to resolve. Staff help children to understand why it may not be possible to act upon their wishes in all cases. For example contact arrangements, access to social networking sites and visitors to the home.

Young people understand how to make a complaint there is evidence of one complaint being made and resolved. Young people raise a number of issues they would like to be addressed during the course of the inspection. They discussed their concerns with the manager. The manager agreed to deal with these complaints now that she has been made aware of them. Young people have access to a variety of independent sources of support, including children's rights, placing social workers, a clinical psychologist and other health professionals. They are confident about contacting these support services if they have any problems.

The home has a dedicated telephone; it is broken at the time of this visit and young people say it has not been working for sometime. Young people have their own mobile telephones; these can be confiscated through imposing a sanction. This means that at times young people's access to help lines can be restricted as they have to ask staff for the use of the house telephone.

Young people are cared for in line with their individual placement plans and the contribution of the home to those plans is of high quality; it involves children and young people and people who are significant to them in devising the plans, where appropriate. The result of all statutory reviews and reviews of placement plans are recorded on the child's file, and individuals responsible for pursuing actions at the home arising from reviews are clearly identified.

The home provides a healthy environment where children and young people are able to access the services and support they need to meet their physical, emotional and psychological health needs. Young people's health needs are promoted. Staff help them to understand their health needs, how to maintain a healthy lifestyle and to make informed decisions about their own health. The home ensures that young people who have been out of school for sometime receive their necessary

immunisations. Staff are aware of the importance of maintaining good physical and emotional health to enable young people to grow into mature, stable and well-balanced adults.

Staff are proactive and consistent in supporting the educational achievement of children and young people. They engage with young people's schools and successfully promote attendance by having a clear ethos and expectation that young people will achieve through their educational experiences. There are good daily routines in place. If young people refuse to attend every effort is made to support them and facilitate their attendance; this home is particularly good in ensuring that young people attended schools for their GCSE examinations.

Staff develop the understanding of diversity with young people in respect of undertaking different themed evenings and ensuring that particular groups are not unfairly treated. Young people's individual identity is respected and resources are made available to them. Young people say that staff respect their cultural beliefs and their individual ethnic backgrounds are noted in their placement plans. This ensures that plans are tailored to individual needs and that all personal and cultural needs are met.

The home is appropriately located and designed. The kitchen has been refurbished and repairs have been completed in respect of damp and re-decorating the area since the time of the last inspection; staff and young people said it looks much better. There are plans to re-decorate the lounge whilst young people are on holiday. There has been a leak through the roof which caused some damage in one of the bedrooms, this has also been repaired. The young people did not raise any concerns about the environment and overall it meets their needs of well.

The overall appearance of the home is good, but there are matters that require attention including; for example, the removal of some discarded items next to the shed and at the rear of the premises; the suite in the lounge is worn, some carpeting in the young people's rooms requires cleaning, some bedroom furniture requires repair or replacement and not all of the young people have keys to their bedroom doors. The manager was effectively ensuring that this was addressed on the second day of the inspection. Repairs and maintenance were being undertaken and there are plans to redecorate some areas of the home when the young people go on their holiday.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people say that they are safe and feel safe and that there is no bullying; however they also reported that occasionally they feel that their safety can be compromised due to 'arguing, stirring and bickering'. Young people say that they feel protected and are protected from significant harm; however they also report that incidents can compromise their feelings. This matter was brought to the attention of the manager at the time of the inspection both by the young people and the inspector. The manager was in the process of effectively dealing with this matter well on the second day of the inspection in conjunction with other professionals including the placing social worker.

All staff undertake safeguarding training; they are clear about their role in safeguarding young people's welfare and circumstances when they must use the home's whistle blowing procedure.

Investigations into allegations or suspicions of harm are handled fairly, quickly, and consistently in a way that provides effective protection for children, the person making the allegation, and at the same time supports the person who is the subject of the allegation. The home maintains good records with regard to these matters.

Social workers report that the home provides good safety arrangements for the young people resident and staff work with them and keep them informed of any developments or concerns about individual young people. The home has very good links with other professionals and employs their own clinical psychologist. Young people report favourably about the work that is being undertaken and look forward to the sessions; which they say they find helpful. Risk assessment and management in respect of supporting young people if they are distressed is also good. Clear written guidelines are in place for staff about managing such behaviours.

Young people have made very good progress with regard to reducing the periods of being missing from home. Social workers say this has been a notable area of strength. The home maintains good records of all absences. Young people who do go missing are protected as far as possible and responded to positively on their return the home works closely with the local police. Young people who do go missing say they are with their friends, there is a reluctance to co-operate with associated checks and they do not go missing because of issues in the home.

Positive behaviour is promoted, and restraint is only used, if at all, in strict accordance with the legislative framework. Staff undertake training in behaviour management which focuses on de-escalation techniques; staff say that these strategies work well and there are no records of any restraint taking place. Staff say they would only physically intervene as a last resort to protect a young person. The home operates an incentive reward system to support young people with meeting individual behaviours. These do help to improve problematic behaviours and they give a clear picture of what areas of behaviour individual young people are working towards at a given time. They also show achievements clearly.

Young people discussed their views around the use of sanctions; generally they say that they are fair but explored discussions around removal of items from bedrooms

and 'having your electric chopped'; this is a behaviour management strategy used by the home. This may happen if a young person refuses to turn down the music in their bedroom, particularly at night and is in respect of the sockets and not the lighting. The Registered Manager is aware of this, but it is not included in the behaviour management policy. If this measure is used a record is made of it in the sanctions book.

No new staff have been appointed to the home since the time of the last inspection and all staff files have been inspected during previous inspections of this service. They have demonstrated that staff are carefully selected, vetted and that the required checks have taken place to demonstrate safe staff recruitment. Staff also ensure they verify the identity of visitors to the home; this also helps to keep young people safe.

The environment is physically safe and appropriately secure; no hazards are identified during the course of the inspection and all checks on installations and equipment have been undertaken. The home uses CCTV to monitor the exterior of the home and there are monitors on individual doors upstairs to alert staff to the possibility of young people going into each others bedrooms.

The manager reports that both measures have been in place for some time. However consent has not been obtained from the local authority for the use of the monitoring equipment in respect of bedroom doors, it is not included in the Statement of Purpose, not included in individual placement plans, and it is not clear how young people have been consulted about the use of the monitoring equipment. Young people have accepted this as part of the operation of the home, they do not report any issues of their privacy being infringed; this is why they need to be consulted and their views gained.

Leadership and management

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

The home is very effective in providing personalised, well planned care, taking full account of the individual needs of each young person. The home and staff are dedicated to promoting positive outcomes for all young people.

The views of the young people about the quality of care in the home was variable. On the whole young people report positively about the service; they have achieved placement stability and some young people have been in the placement for a long time and their outcomes are outstanding. They say at the time of this visit that there are issues that need to be addressed in respect of living as a group, getting along together; because when they are not this can make some young people feel that their safety may be compromised.

The home is effectively managed there are clear plans in practice for the development of the service but there is not written development plan in place at the time of this visit. Leaders and managers understand the strengths and weaknesses of the home. The Registered Manager is proactive in dealing with matters that come to their attention during the course of the inspection and young people are confident that their concerns will be dealt with. The home can demonstrate capacity for continuing improvement based upon previous inspections of the service.

One recommendation from the previous inspection has been addressed; this was in relation to developing a room search policy. This gives clear information to staff about when and in what circumstances they may conduct such a search.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good; there is evidence of celebration of festivals and work to develop awareness of diversity with the young people is regularly undertaken. Access to additional services to support young people with their identity are in place. Young people report having good relationships with staff; these are evident throughout the course of the inspection and in the individual sessions undertaken with young people.

The provider meets the aims and objectives in the Statement of Purpose. Young people, staff and the placing authority are clear about the aims and objectives of the home and what services and facilities it provides. The children's guide is clear and informative.

The Registered Manager actively and regularly monitors the quality of care provided. In addition the home has regular independent visits by a Regulation 33 visitor, which give an overall picture of how the home is functioning and includes consultation with young people; it is not always clear if young people and staff are given the opportunity to meet with the visitor in private. Reports of both systems and monitoring are made available in the home.

The home employs a sufficient number of staff, who are appropriately trained, effectively supervised and supported. Staff say that the quality of their training is good and gives them a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. They say that the support that they receive from the manager is 'fantastic ... brilliant ...

great; the manager is always available to support the staff in the home through an on call system.

Young people's records are clear, up to date and stored securely, and contribute to an understanding of the young person's life. In addition the manager is knowledgeable about the circumstances of individual young people prior to their admission.

Significant events in the home have not been notified by the registered person of the home to Ofsted. Although written records demonstrate that appropriate action has been taken following these incidents.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.