

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Debbie Foster
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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 run by a company provides care and accommodation for one young person aged between eight to 17 years. The service will take the planned and emergency placements of young people.

Overall effectiveness

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

Young people receive a level of care which is good. They live in a calm, caring environment and respond positively to a child-focussed and experienced staff team. This fosters strong relationships and communication between young people and staff. Education is a strength of the home, and young people are well supported in this respect.

Young people make forward progress across all aspects of their welfare and development, and there is excellent practice in ensuring they are safeguarded. Young people understand how to make a complaint and are aware of the home's rules.

Good leadership, management and monitoring of the home ensure that care planning is of a high standard, ensuring that young people achieve consistently good quality care and outcomes. Young people are frequently consulted about their care and their views and wishes are acted upon wherever possible.

The shortfalls identified during this inspection are that not all staff have yet attained Children and Young People Workforce Diploma qualification at level 3 and that development plan does not set out specifically the identified areas for improvement for the service. Not all looked after children documentation is in place for all young people to inform the staff on the care the placing authority requires to be provided to meet the young person's individual needs fully.

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
28	ensure the registered person maintains in respect of each child	28/12/2011

(2001)	who is accommodated in a children's home a record in permanent form which includes the information, documents and records specified in Schedule 3 relating to that child. In particular a copy of the plan of the care of the child prepared by his placing authority, or of his placement plan. (Regulation 28, schedule 3 (18))	
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Recommendations

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

- ensure all staff attain Children and Young People Workforce Diploma qualification at level 3 (NMS 18)
- provide an up-to-date development plan which identifies the specific areas for improvement or development. (NMS 15)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people benefit greatly from the strong relationships the staff build with them. Staff communicate by talking and through stimulating interactive activities to establish relationships with the young people. Staff said that 'we encourage and give young people new experiences through having fun on activities and use humour to break down barriers.' Staff effectively engage with young people. As a result, young people gain good knowledge and understanding of their own background, they learn to adapt well to new situations and this improves their view of themselves. Young people's progress at the home is good because great value is placed upon them fulfilling their potential.

Young people enjoy good health because their health needs are effectively identified and services are provided to meet them. They are encouraged and supported to attend routine appointments with dentists, doctors and opticians. Older young people are encouraged to take some responsibility for managing their own health needs. The young people's health is closely monitored and record keeping is good, enabling staff to change their ways of working or inform medical professionals of health progress. Specialist health workers are involved where appropriate to promote good health and discourage unhealthy behaviours such as smoking and taking substances. Healthy activities take place such as walking and football. Young people are given choices about their food, and the food served is both healthy and nutritious. The staff are aware of individual children's likes and dislikes to ensure that they enjoy the food served, including matters arising from diversity are taken into account. Young people say they are eating plenty of fruit and vegetables and confirm that they are involved in planning, shopping for and cooking meals.

Young people have made good progress in attendance and achievement in their education. The staff have worked in a determined manner to ensure that appropriate placements are sourced quickly. As a result, young people can receive an education to ensure they are learning and achieving. Contact between the home and school is established immediately at the point of admission and effectively maintained enabling staff to support young people successfully with attendance, homework or personal targets. Some young people's attitude to school has changed as a result of their good experiences of learning, achieving and socialising.

Young people confirm that they are helped to keep in touch with people that are important to them, and that they can visit friends and family. This is supported by staff who understand the importance of contact and facilitate visits very well. This is done safely and sensitively to protect young people's welfare.

Young people learn life skills through taking part in the tasks of running the home. Young people are given help and support with laundry, cooking skills, budgeting, shopping and undertaking household chores. Therefore, young people receive care which prepares them well for adulthood.

Quality of care

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

Young people living benefit greatly from an experienced staff group who enthusiastically demonstrate their commitment and child-centred approach to addressing young people's care and safety needs. Young people say that, 'I can go and talk to the staff and they explain things to me.' Staff are persevering and supportive, innovatively to create opportunities for young people to reach their full potential.

Young people thrive from the warm relationships that exist with staff and there is good rapport between them. Staff discuss difficult issues with young people and challenge inappropriate behaviours consistently and sensitively. Staff are good role models, giving young people positive experiences of good relationships, which they will be able to draw from for existing and future friendships. This will build on their confidence, self-esteem and emotional resilience.

Staff robustly encourage young people with school attendance, undertaking educational work and support them to get there. Staff are pro-active and challenging when seeking out the most appropriate education provision for young people. They work hard to help young people understand the importance of getting an education and how this will benefit the young person in the future and into adult life.

Young people confirm that their views are genuinely sought and acted upon. The staff encourage them to make decisions about their lives and influence the way that the home is run. Staff provide young people with opportunities daily to be involved and give their opinions. This is achieved by one-to-one discussion, key worker

sessions, young people's meetings and attendance at their own planning and statutory reviews. Examples of young people's choices acted upon include activities, food and family contact. A young person said 'I have bought posters for my bedroom.' This has allowed the young person to personalise their own bedroom in the way that they wish. Any cases where it is not possible to act upon young people's wishes are carefully explained to them. Young people say 'staff have explained things to me', highlighting examples such as coming in times and visiting arrangements.

Young people say 'staff have told me about how to make a complaint if I need to.' The staff handle complaints well. They ensure that the young people know how to complain if they wish by explaining what to do. There is also good, clear information in the children's guide about how to complain. The staff assist young people in making complaints if necessary and they understand their role as advocate. Complaints are clearly recorded to reflect the action taken by the staff and the outcomes.

Young people are able to move into the home in a planned and sensitive manner, which assists them in settling in. The home's referral system enables the manager to assess the needs of the young people concerned. Admissions to the home are not always planned but, where possible, the young person and their family, where appropriate, are involved in that planning. Young people can visit the home before they move in.

Young people have their needs assessed well, and good written placement plans outline how these needs will be met. Their placement plans are well recorded with good clarity to inform the staff what they need to do to meet the identified needs of individuals. One member of staff said, 'All the staff team are clear on the care to be provided to young people, we discuss the care plan in staff meetings and handover thoroughly.' Focused one-to-one work is also undertaken to provide young people with guidance, advice and support on relevant matters. The daily records reflect the content of the care plan and show the action taken by the staff to meet the identified needs of the young person. However, not all looked after children's documents have been obtained from the placing authority prior or on admission to the home. Therefore, staff do not have detailed and up-to-date information on all the care and needs of the young person. This could impact negatively on ensuring that all health, safety and welfare needs of the young people are fully met.

Young people's needs and development are reviewed regularly in the light of their care, progress and significant changes. Following reviews, placement plans are updated. Young people actively participate in the reviewing system. Key-workers monitor the placement plans and produce progress reports. These reports show the progress young people are making and where the staff continue to support young people with areas that still present them with challenges in their lives. Statutory case reviews take place within the required timescales to inform those working at the home and others of progress made by young people.

The staff appreciate that the individual young people may have needs arising from

diversity. The young people receive very good individualised support appropriate to their needs. The staff access individual support services involved in the health, care and education of the young people. The home has links with a range of helping agencies, and good practice has helped to quickly provide services to fit the individual young person's needs. Staff are aided in providing good quality health care by external professionals in physical and emotional health. They provide advice directly to young people and indirectly by advice supplied to the staff team, to aid positive outcomes for the young people. Examples include support regarding discussion with the looked after children nurse and education professionals.

Young people's education is a very high priority and it is vigorously promoted. Staff see it as valuable in itself and as part of the young people's preparation for adulthood. The staff work closely with schools and other education providers to secure good quality school placements. Staff make a lot of effort to encourage good attendance. A notable area of strength is the staff's close communication and support of education staff to sustain and increase the young people's time in education. Staff achieve this through establishing close working relationships with school staff and communicating regularly about progress and individual targets. There are space, resources and facilities at the home to enable the completion of homework or structured home study programmes. A computer is available for the young people to use for educational purposes and well monitored internet access is available.

Young people are able to pursue their particular interests and are supported and encouraged by staff to engage in leisure activities. In an attempt to enable young people to socialise and to build their esteem and confidence, young people's involvement is well supported by staff who explore their individual choices, likes and dislikes. The staff have a very good knowledge of community-based activity providers and pull on staff hobbies and interests to give extended opportunities and experiences to young people. Examples of organised activities include walking, football, bowling, ice skating and cycling. There is also a good range of books, DVDs and games available for education and entertainment.

Young people benefit from living in a comfortable home, which provides them with a safe, secure environment. The interior and exterior of the home are maintained in a very good standard of structural and decorative repair. There is a satisfactory maintenance and repair programme for the building, furniture and equipment, and any damage is repaired promptly. The garden is well maintained and safe. The home is kept clean and there are homely touches throughout.

Good policies and practice around the storage, handling, administration and disposal of medication safeguards young people's welfare.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people's welfare is very important and central to practice. Staff describe

safeguarding young people as, 'this is an absolute must.' Staff support young people to learn how to keep themselves safe and learn about risks. Where particular risks are identified, consistently well written risk assessments are recorded to help the staff understand what action to take to minimise the identified risks. The service has an identified person to oversee safeguarding matters and can access advice if necessary from the appropriate professionals. The manager considers what local resources further support young people, for example, the community police and drug awareness groups. Staff use team meetings to ensure that everyone is up to date about how to promote and protect the young people's safety.

Young people's safety is protected further by the good safeguarding systems and procedures for staff to follow in the event of any allegation or suspicion of abuse. The manager and staff have received child protection training. Staff demonstrate good knowledge and understanding of the safeguarding procedures to promote and protect young people's safety. Anti-bullying messages are clear to young people and the subject is regularly discussed ensuring they are fully aware of the support available and that it is not tolerated. There are specific protocols for staff to follow in the event of unauthorised absence. This is supported by individualised risk assessment records. The manager secures good multi-agency working, for example, liaising with the local missing person officer to ensure a holistic approach to safeguarding. This ensures all agencies are vigilant and work to current plans to offer protection for young people.

Behaviour management forms part of each young person's care. The promotion of positive behaviour of young people is the main focus with young people receiving rewards and incentives for good and positive behaviour. This area is a real strength. Young people have rarely receive sanctions; these are relevant and reflect their age and understanding. They are reviewed regularly for effectiveness. Staff have managed behaviour well using positive behaviour strategies. This has meant no physical restraint has taken place, ensuring positive outcomes for young people. Staff are trained in the provider's policy and authorised techniques. Record keeping is good and there is evidence that it is monitored well to identify patterns or trends that can be used to support young people further.

All staff working at the home have received up-to-date fire safety training to enable them to minimise the risks to young people in the event of a fire at the home. This is supported by regular fire safety checks and drills to help ensure that young people's physical safety from fire in the home is well protected.

Young people are cared for by safe and suitable staff. This is achieved by all staff being appropriately recruited, a number of appropriate checks being carried out, including a Criminal Records Bureau check.

Leadership and management

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

A Statement of Purpose is available to inform professionals and members of the

public about how care is provided to young people whilst living at the home. There is a good children's guide to the statement which is appropriate to the age and understanding of the young people accommodated. Young people receive a copy of this before they come to live at the home or on arrival so that they know about the home they are to live in, clear on their rights and on what to expect.

There is a strong, diverse and consistent staff team who bring a wealth of experience, with a broad range of skills amongst its members. This enables them to meet young people's individual needs very well. New members of staff receive good quality induction training before commencing work with the young people, giving them essential knowledge to facilitate their care of young people. Management support and supervision are described as, 'good' and, 'we can discuss matters at anytime, we don't have to wait for a formal supervision session' by a staff team who clearly benefit from this style of management.

The young people are receiving care from competent staff who are appropriately trained to meet their needs. All staff are trained in a wide variety of safety and childcare subjects. An ongoing programme of regular refresher training is provided in a range of subjects to enhance the staff team's competency and to continue to meet the needs of the young people effectively.

The manager has a good system in place to monitor report and evaluate the administration systems of the home. Where weakness are identified they are acted upon. Monthly Regulation 33 visits are undertaken by the provider. These report on the required areas set out in the regulation, along with others to evaluate the care received by young people. However, the development plan does not set out the specific planned changes in the operation of the service to improve the care and service provided to young people.

All records are clear, contribute to the understanding and development of a young person's life, are up to date and are securely stored in a locked office. Young people's case file records and other written documentation are of a good standard. This facilitates and supports good communication with other professionals as well as ensuring young people have a permanent and secure record of their history.

Appropriate action has been taken to address the previous recommendation made on the last inspection. All staff have completed or working towards obtaining the qualification in Caring for Children and Young People Workforce Diploma at level 3. This helps to ensure that young people are receiving care from competent staff that are appropriately trained to meet their needs.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.