

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC356565
Inspector	Trevor Hall
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Registered manager	Millicent Delveria Vernon
Date of last inspection	13/01/2014

Inspection date	04/06/2014
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Previous inspection	good progress
Enforcement action since last inspection	none

This inspection	
Overall effectiveness	adequate
Outcomes for children and young people	adequate
Quality of care	adequate
Keeping children and young people safe	adequate
Leadership and management	adequate

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	adequate
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Young people experience an adequate standard of care because staff provide a generally safe living experience. As a result, young people are supported to achieve satisfactory outcomes. Care planning is on the whole satisfactory, however, there is a need to make pre-admission assessments more robust to ensure that the home only admits young people whose needs they can realistically meet and who are compatible with other residents. The home needs to ensure that up to date care plans are available for all young people and that these are reviewed regularly and the outcomes of these reviews need to be clearly recorded.

Preparing young people for independent living is a particular strength of the home, however, there is a need to improve the arrangements for education provision, to ensure that all young people promptly receive an education designed to meet their identified needs. The home works hard to ensure young people receive effective healthcare, assessment, treatment and support that reflect their particular needs. The current level of staff training in first aid, however, potentially compromises young people's safety.

Safeguarding young people's welfare is given a suitably high priority, both in terms of the health and safety of the environment and promoting young people's physical and mental well-being. Behaviour management, risk-taking behaviour and

unauthorised absence from the home have both marginally increased since the home was last inspected. The home's current policies and procedures in these areas would be enhanced by greater consistency of application and by ensuring that these policies are compatible with local protocols.

Young people receive adequate on-going care and support from a care team that is dedicated, hardworking and committed to achieving the best possible outcomes for them. The home is effectively managed. Internal and external monitoring processes provide continuous quality assurance which helps to maintain the home's adequate standard of care and assists in promoting the on-going improvement of the service. Staff acknowledge that they receive generally good support, guidance and direction from the Registered Manager, who leads by example and is ambitious to achieve good outcomes for the young people in her care.

Full report

Information about this children's home

The children's home is run by a private organisation and is registered to provide care and accommodation for two young people with emotional or behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
13/01/2014	Interim	good progress
18/07/2013	Full	good
09/01/2013	Interim	good progress
24/07/2012	Full	adequate

What does the children's home need to do to improve further?

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
28 (2001)	ensure that the registered person maintains in respect of each child who is accommodated in a children's home a record in permanent form that includes the information, documents and records specified in Schedule 3 relating to that child, specifically any plan for the care of the child prepared by his placing authority, and of the placement plan (Regulation 28(1)(a) Schedule 3(18))	31/07/2014
20 (2001)	ensure that at all times, at least one person on duty at the children's home has a suitable first aid qualification (Reg 20(2)(e))	31/07/2014

Recommendations

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

- ensure that the home's approach to care minimises the need for police involvement to deal with challenging behaviour and avoids criminalising children unnecessarily. The home follows procedures and guidance on police involvement in the home, which has been agreed with local police (NMS 3.22)
- ensure that the home has a clear written policy on managing behaviour, which includes supporting positive behaviour, de-escalation of conflicts, discipline, control and restraint, that all staff understand and apply at all times (NMS 3.3)
- ensure that if a child is absent from the home and their whereabouts is not known, the home's procedures are compatible with and have regard to Runaway and Missing from Home and Care (RMFHC) protocols and procedures maintained and managed by the police or by the local authority where the home is located (NMS 5.6)
- ensure that staff understand what is in the child's placement plan and have clarity about decisions they can make about day to day arrangements for the child, (NMS 7.3)
- ensure that children who have been excluded from school have access to appropriate education and training. So that they are supported and enabled to resume full time education (NMS 8.8)
- ensure that the children's home only provides admission to children whose assessed needs they can reasonably expect to meet, this relates particularly to the need to adequately conduct and record robust impact risk assessments on potential residents prior to their admission. (NMS 11.2)
- ensure the results of all statutory reviews and reviews of Placement Plans are recorded on the child's file and individuals responsible for pursuing actions at home arising from reviews are clearly identified (NMS 25.8)

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **adequate**

Young people living in this home are supported by a committed and enthusiastic staff team, who provide an adequate quality of care to the home's residents. Care planning arrangements are generally satisfactory, however, not every young person has a properly constituted local authority endorsed care plan on file and recording of review outcomes on occasion lack clarity. The home has demonstrated admirable tenacity in its attempts to advocate on behalf of young people with placing authorities when they have failed to meet their obligations in respect of appropriate care planning. The home's management and staff strive to ensure that when these shortfalls are present they do not overtly impact on the care that they deliver.

The staff team provide a supportive and caring environment. Young people clearly benefit from the security and structure that exists within this home. Despite the potential for these young people to demonstrate challenging behaviours they enjoy generally positive relationships with the staff group. Greater clarity and consistency, however, particularly around individual behaviour management planning would enhance the young people's feelings of security without denying them their individuality. This would also help them to improve their self-image and build up their emotional resilience.

Young people have ready access to all the primary health services they require. They receive the support and encouragement they need to access any medical appointments. Young people are encouraged to take an increasingly independent role in the provision of their own health care, in order to help them prepare for adulthood. Young people are assisted to access any specialist health provision they may require including any support needed with their emotional health. Healthy eating is encouraged and young people are encouraged to eat a nutritious and varied diet. Staff assist young people to make informed choices about their personal health, emotional and social issues, including sexual health, relationships, and the dangers of substance misuse. A lack of appropriate staff training in first aid within the staff group, however, has the potential to undermine the safe care of the home's residents.

Young people are encouraged to express their feelings and emotions. The home promotes a positive ethos that fully embraces diversity and difference; as a result, young people learn to appreciate the significance of differing values and cultures and to have respect for other people. This ethos also promotes positive behaviours, assists young people to understand the consequences of their actions, and encourages alternative and more acceptable responses.

Young people learn to value and enjoy their environment. They are actively involved in contributing to the selection of furnishings and items for the home. They are also

encouraged and supported to decorate their bedrooms. Young people raise suggestions to improve the home through their young people's meetings, key worker meetings and through day-to-day discussions with staff.

The home is not registered to provide education, as such, most young people access suitable education by attending local schools or colleges. Many of the home's residents have had negative educational experiences, including extended periods of exclusion from mainstream education. Young people are encouraged to develop a positive self-image and are supported by staff to attend suitable education and vocational training. This does much to improve their self-image and improve their emotional resilience. Staff hold high aspirations in respect of young people's potential educational achievements and try to maximise every opportunity to help young people engage in education. Attendance and attainment is variable when judged against individual starting points, most young people, however, show a discernible improvement. Outside agencies, placing social workers and youth offending officers report general satisfaction with the outcomes achieved by the young people they place and with the efforts made by staff to encourage attendance and improved attainment.

At the time of inspection not all young people were on the roll of an appropriate educational establishment. The home's pre-admission procedures do not give sufficient weighting to the potential difficulties in sourcing appropriate local education provisions, particularly, when young people have already been excluded from school. This results in some young people enduring protracted delays in receiving an appropriate education.

Young people are encouraged where appropriate to retain strong links with their families. They receive help to maintain or improve any relationships which may be difficult for them. This helps them retain an understanding and appreciation of their heritage and the key relationships they will require in later life. Young people are able to develop and maintain friendships outside the home.

Where appropriate Pathway plans constitute part of young people's care planning arrangements and young people routinely become involved in doing their own laundry, learning to budget, shop and to cook some simple meals or snacks. The home can evidence that where such plans are not in place, they are attempt to engage with the placing authority to create them.

Quality of care

adequate

Young people are provided with an adequate level of care, by a small, but dedicated staff team, who are committed to helping them achieve good outcomes. Young people's individual cultural and gender needs are identified and appropriately met. Adults provide good role models that emphasise equality and promote the value of individuality, which effectively challenges the negative impact of stereotypical gender,

cultural and age-related issues.

The home's management team is striving to create a supportive and caring environment within the home. However, the recent loss of some experienced staff has impacted upon their ability to do so. Although the home's Statement of Purpose indicates that most of the young people should be planned admissions with medium to long term placements, it does allow for emergency admission to the home. None of the last six placements has remained in the home for more than four months and most of these have been emergency placements. If this trend continues, there will be a need to review the Statement of Purpose to ensure that it accurately reflects the operation of the home.

Relationships between young people and their carers were observed to be generally good. Each young person has an individual behaviour management plan, which is supported by the home's managing behaviour policy. This details how staff should support positive behaviour, de-escalate conflict and outlines the home's discipline and physical intervention procedures, however, its application has been inconsistent and the home has on occasion been forced to call local police for support to maintain the safety of the care environment. All staff have recently undertaken physical intervention training, to better equip themselves to manage potentially volatile behaviour.

The home has an adequate anti-bullying policy that is known by all staff and young people. Young people do not feel that they are at risk of being bullied and none of the home's records indicate that bullying is an issue in the home. The young person's guide contains good information about the home's internal and external complaints procedures. This enables young people to access external assistance if they are unhappy with any aspect of the care they receive.

The home provides young people with good support for their health needs. All young people are registered with a local doctor and dentist and have regular access to an optician. Medication is safely stored. Vigilant checking in and dispensing of medication ensures accurate and up-to-date records, which evidences safe practice. Not all staff have undertaken an appropriate first aid course, which makes it very difficult for the registered manager to guarantee that a first aid qualified staff member is always deployed on each shift.

Young people are provided with appropriate support and advice regarding their emotional, physical and sexual development and the home has developed effective links with external agencies to support this process.

Communication between staff and young people was observed, on the whole, to be good, which results in staff being able to respond effectively; this ensures that young people's needs and wishes are well known. Young people are encouraged and supported to make decisions about their lives in line with their individual needs. They have regular meetings with their key worker to discuss progress and any issues of

concern. As a result, they feel valued and actively influence the running of the home. Young people present well, wear appropriate clothing and have sufficient belongings to meet their needs and receive pocket money and appropriate allowances to help purchase clothing and toiletries of their choice.

Young people live in a well maintained home that provides sufficient space to meet their needs. When redecoration or repair is identified as necessary, these are proactively addressed through a short-term maintenance system and a long-term development plan. Young people have good quality furniture in their bedrooms and ample storage for personal clothes and belongings. The home enjoys good links to local facilities and is within reasonable reach of good transport links. The home also has a vehicle that means that young people have convenient transport for activities, shopping and contact visits with family.

Keeping children and young people safe adequate

Residents in the home declined repeatedly to take any active part in the inspection process, as such they were unable/unwilling to express any statement about how they felt about their personal safety whilst living in the home. Young people were observed interacting with staff in a generally construct manner and did not give the impression of being concerned about their own personal safety. The home's records demonstrate that it effectively addressed bullying behaviours when they occurred among past residents. Young people have access to a telephone that they can use without recourse to staff. This means that young people are able to raise concerns with someone outside the home.

The home compiles a comprehensive set of individualised risk assessments for each young person in residence. These assessments are proactive, identifying potential risks and providing effective strategies to help to minimise these. These cover aspects of the young people's potential behaviour, the environment and the activities they wish to undertake.

Staff work hard to enable young people to moderate and improve their behaviour. Each young person has an individual behaviour management plan, which is supported by the home's managing behaviour policy. Lack of consistency in the application of the home's behaviour management plan, particularly in respect of when staff should call local police following violent incidents in the home, has undermined the creation of clear boundaries and caused a degree of confusion for the young people in residence. The home's Registered Manager acknowledged that there was a need to liaise better with the local police, to ensure that internal procedures and staff guidance was compatible with local police protocols.

Staff use physical interventions only as a last resort and only when necessary to ensure the safety of all. Physical interventions are infrequent, only seven since the home was last inspected. The home's manager monitors such intervention and

ensures that it was necessary, applied correctly and recorded.

The use of sanctions is minimal and fair, 17 sanctions have been applied shared between six young people over a five months period. There is an emphasis on recognising and rewarding positive behaviours, rather than purely punishing those behaviours identified as being unacceptable. This enables young people to develop more socially acceptable behaviour and better prepares them to interact positively with the wider community. Young people are invited to sign all records relating to the use of sanctions, which helps them develop understanding and responsibility.

All staff have received appropriate safeguarding training. As a result, they demonstrate a good understanding of the action they should take should they have any concerns about a young person's safety or well-being. Two safeguarding notifications have been made since the home's last inspection, both involving young people putting themselves at risk by repeatedly going missing from care, mixing with inappropriate people and placing themselves at risk. Both referrals were appropriate and resulted in placements being terminated by the home, due to their acknowledged inability to keep the young people in question appropriately safe. In examining the home's other records no other incidents were identified that should have been notified. Effective working with external partners, such as the Local Authority Designated Officer, ensures the continued development of staff's knowledge and understanding of child protection practice.

The home has appropriate policies in place in relation to young people absenting themselves from the home, without staff approval. There have been 19 instances of young people being reported to the police as being missing from care, involving four young people since the home was last inspected. These numbers indicate a significant increase over the intervening period and have caused the police to question the home's application of its procedures and to query the staffs understanding of this procedure and how it relates to agreed local protocols. These procedures if properly applied should minimise the risk that young people will go missing and reduce the risk of harm should they absent themselves. The establishing of joint protocols and the fostering of positive relationships with the local police will also complement this practice.

The home has a good health and safety regime, which ensures that all fire precautions, drills and equipment servicing are conducted routinely, consistently and within timescales set by the relevant regulations. Risk assessments of the whole children's home environment have been conducted, which identify all potential sources of harm. These assessments are recorded in writing and are regularly reviewed. The organisation's effective recruitment procedures ensure the careful selection and recruitment of staff. New staff are comprehensively vetted prior to their deployment in the home and before having unsupervised access to any young person.

Leadership and management

adequate

The home's Registered Manager is also the owner of Eagle Care, she is appropriately qualified and experienced and provides satisfactory leadership and support to the staff group. She has an adequate insight into how the home is functioning and of the outcomes being achieved by the young people in her care. The staff team, although small in number, has a core of experienced staff who strive to ensure that the young people's needs are met. There has been some turnover of staff since the last inspection, which has had an impact upon the consistency of care.

Professionals contacted were on the whole positive about the home and the service it provides. Some concerns, however, about, behaviour management, appropriateness of referral selection and staff understanding of their responsibilities in respect of children missing from care were voiced by the local police. The home's Registered Manager acknowledged the need to improve aspects of staff training and to improve liaison between the home and the local police. Staff training in dealing effectively with challenging behaviour has already been delivered and discussions have taken place through staff meetings to address other concerns.

All staff interviewed confirmed that they were receiving regular and consistent supervision, coupled with regular team meetings; none expressed any concern about the quality or frequency of training received. The team is currently one staff member under number and whilst additional staff are recruited existing staff are undertaking extra duties, rather, than deploying agency staff, to ensure constancy of care. There is strong, visible leadership within the home which encourages the provision of adequate care and positive outcomes for young people.

The home has a clear accessible and comprehensive Statement of Purpose and young person's guide giving young people, their families and placing authorities good quality information about the services offered by the home. The home is well resourced, indicating the financial viability of the provider. The staff treat young people with the appropriate respect and dignity and support them in overcoming significant and complex issues.

Young people take an active part in the running of the home and they are encouraged to make their views known through discussions with staff and by attending house meetings. The ease of access afforded by the home's owner also being the Registered Manager enables both young people and staff to have a regular and direct conduit to the decision making within the home.

All staff members comment positively about the manager's commitment, child-centred approach, staff support and clear monitoring processes. The manager invests time in reviewing and checking the quality of reports and plans, to ensure that they adequately support the work with young people. It is clear that all reporting systems are regularly checked and comments made if any record fails to meet either the home's policies and procedures or national regulations. Staff duty rotas and staff

deployment confirm that the home keeps sufficient staff on the duty rota at all times.

The home has an appropriate complaints system, which has been used once since the home was last inspected. This complaint was appropriately dealt with and resolution was shared with the young person and interested outside agencies.

The Registered Manager has established good internal quality assurance monitoring systems; these reports help the home to develop its practice and ensure that young people are receiving the care and support they need. A new system of monthly external monitoring visits to the home has been established since the last inspection. These are conducted by an independent agency contracted for the purpose and adequately meet the requirements of the recently amended Children's Homes Regulations. Reports are produced of these visits copies of which are sent to Ofsted as required.

On the home's last interim inspection, conducted on 13th January 2014 no requirements were made and only one recommendation was raised, this related to providing staff with training in physical intervention; all staff have subsequently received this training.

What inspection judgements mean

Judgement	Description
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.

Information 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 framework of inspection for children's homes.