

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	30/04/2013
Inspector	Stella Henderson
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	10/09/2012
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The children's home is owned and operated by a local authority. It is registered to provide care and accommodation for six young people who experience behavioural and emotional 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**.

The home provides an adequate quality of care for young people. Individualised plans reflect young people's diverse needs. These are successfully addressed, resulting in young people enjoying improved outcomes.

Young people express satisfaction in living at the home, report they are safe and that staff listen to their views. Safeguarding responsibilities are understood by staff and their actions keep young people safe. Parents feel that their children are well looked after and are safe at the home.

The manager has a good understanding of young people's needs and the positive impact of staff intervention on young people's lives. The home meets the objectives of its Statement of Purpose but some shortfalls are identified, particularly in relation to monitoring by the provider, behaviour management and sustaining positive change.

Requirements and recommendations are made to assist the provider to further drive forward improvement for the benefit of young people. The provider took immediate steps to address some of the shortfalls identified at this inspection which demonstrates a capacity to quickly respond to concerns.

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
17 (2001)	ensure that no measure of control or discipline which is excessive, unreasonable or contrary to paragraph (2) shall be used at any time on children accommodated in a children's home (Regulation (17)(1))	06/05/2013
34 (2001)	supply to the HMCI a report in respect of any review conducted by him for the purposes of paragraph (1) and ensure that the system referred to in paragraph (1) shall provide for consultation with children accommodated at the home, their parents and placing authorities. (Regulation 34)(2)(3))	25/06/2013

Recommendations

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

- ensure that all children communicate their views on all aspects of their care and support. This is with specific reference to reflecting their views in their placements plans (NMS 1.3)
- ensure children are helped by staff to achieve their educational or training goals. This includes providing support, facilities and opportunities as needed. Staff work with a child's education provider to maximise each child's achievement and to minimise any underachievement (NMS 8.4)
- ensure that avoidable hazards are removed as is consistent with a domestic setting (NMS 10.3)
- ensure that the manager exercises effective leadership of the home's staff and operation, such that the home is organised, managed and staffed in a manner that delivers sound, good quality care that meets the individual needs of each child at the home. This is specifically in relation to sustaining improvements from previous inspections (NMS 14.5)
- ensure that information about individual children is kept confidential and only shared with those who have a legitimate need to know the information. (NMS 22.3)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **adequate**.

Young people are helped to learn about and come to terms with their life experiences at a pace suited to their individual needs. Maintaining contact with family and friends assists in reinforcing young people's sense of identity along with an emphasis on the positive aspects of their lives. Attention to young people's needs relating to cultural heritage and gender also helps to provide them with sense of self-worth.

Apart from the occasional minor ailment, young people enjoy good health. Young people are of an age where they decide for themselves any sporting or leisure pursuits they wish to get involved with. They are helped to resist involvement in those activities which risk their immediate and longer-term health, and are encouraged in the direction of healthy diets. This is undermined, however, by some items of food being available to them which are past their 'use by' date.

The majority of young people attend school regularly. Their attainment is in line with expected grades. Staff and colleagues in the pupil referral unit work hard to encourage those who are disengaged and offer alternatives. However, there is little additional assistance for those who are ambitious to do well. This may hinder them in achieving their full potential. Some young people report not having access to a computer and printer. This limits their ability to take full advantage of their school internet accounts and produce good quality work.

Young people have clear opinions and through these are able to make a positive contribution to how the home is run. They engage in the wider community through attending groups such as the army cadets, and participating in events organised by the home. Young people enjoy frequent holidays and excursions which satisfies their educational as well as leisure interests.

All young people have the opportunity to develop the kind of practical skills which will stand them in good stead when they eventually move on to independence. Contributing to household tasks and taking some responsibility for some decision-making assists young people in the very early stages of their journey to adulthood.

Quality of care

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

Young people benefit from effective liaison between staff professionals from partner agencies and parents, all of whom comment positively on the level of communication and cooperation. Young people know that adults are concerned for them and their welfare, which engenders an atmosphere of mutual respect.

There are no serious instances of challenging behaviour. This is because staff set clear and consistent boundaries which young people generally adhere to. Young people's behaviour does not therefore warrant the routine locking of the kitchen at night. This conveys to young people that they cannot be trusted and is unreasonable given the lack of risk their behaviours present.

Young people are knowledgeable about their rights, including how to make complaints. Their views are taken into account in a number of ways. For example, the visitor who monitors the home makes it his business to regularly consult young people. Through formal meetings and frequent dialogue with staff, young people talk about what is important to them and make suggestions for change. This is acted upon wherever possible.

Young people are cared for in line with their placement plans which address all aspects of young people's diverse needs. However, their views are not apparent in these plans and other documentation. This means some of their needs, or better ways of meeting their needs, may be overlooked.

Young people live in a comfortable, spacious and generally well-maintained environment. There is ample space for both communal activity and privacy. The building is situated in an area convenient for public transport which means that young people can exercise their independence in travelling.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people report feeling safe in the home and that staff care about them. Their parents and other professionals concur with this view. Young people report there is no bullying and they are not concerned about being bullied in the home. They can identify who they can turn to for support both inside and outside of the home. Young people choose not to go missing from the home, and such incidents have reduced. Local police report on effective cooperation with staff and say that the home has a low profile within the community.

Safeguarding has strengthened through the introduction of impact assessments. This allows for greater consideration to be applied to placements at the home. Young people benefit from this improved matching process. It has helped to create a more harmonious atmosphere within the home and considerably reduced the levels of challenging behaviour.

Young people say that staff respect them. They are treated as the emerging young adults they are and learn from the good example set by staff about negotiation and compromise. As a result, sanctions are minimal and physical restraint is rare.

Young people are protected by a range of other safeguarding measures. These include the safe administration of medication, sound vetting and recruitment procedures and a range of environmental safety checks within the home.

Leadership and management

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

The home has a Registered Manager and a stable staff team which promotes positive

attachments with young people. It is comfortable and well-resourced which means young people enjoy the same opportunities and life chances as their peers.

Sufficient staff numbers are available to support young people's needs. This ensures they have people to turn to. Mandatory and refresher training is completed by staff. This enables them to remain up-to-date with core aspects of practice. Notifications are appropriately forwarded to agencies to safeguard young people.

Young people, parents and local authorities are suitably informed about the aims and objectives of the home. A satisfactory Statement of Purpose provides information about the service and the home provides care in line with this. Young people confirm that they have been given a children's guide to the home and have read and understood it.

Independent visits to the home are routinely undertaken and contribute to developing the quality of care. Young people's views and those of their parents are routinely sought to influence findings. There is improvement in the manager's response to actions raised in these reports with clear deadlines adhered to.

Two recommendations made at the last inspection regarding training for staff and helping young people to understand their placement plans are met. However, the manager does not ensure that improvements made at previous inspections are sustained, example the routine locking of the kitchen door at night.

A third recommendation to send reports of the manager's reviews to Ofsted is also met. However, the standard of monitoring by the manager is not sufficient to provide a sound evaluation of the home's quality of care, patterns and trends. In addition, young people, their parents and placing officers are not consulted as part of this process. This limits the home's ability to be responsive to need and improve the quality of care experienced by young people.

Recording is of a good standard and files are methodically organised, giving young people a clear picture of their experience and events during their time at the home. However, their right to confidentiality is compromised as their personal details are included in reports sent to Ofsted.

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.