

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Monica Hargreaves
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Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	10/12/2012
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This privately run children's home provides care and accommodation for up to three young people with 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 **good**.

Young people are well cared for by a committed and competent team of staff who have an excellent understanding of their individual and specific needs. As a result of the way they are looked after, young people grow in confidence and self-esteem and consequently make good progress overall.

Young people are safe and feel safe in their home. They enjoy positive, nurturing, relationships with staff. They report that they are able to talk to staff and say that they know that staff are interested in their welfare. Young people are supported to develop their social skills and their behaviour improves over time as a result of the way staff respond to them.

Young people's health needs are thoroughly assessed and met and they are supported to develop a healthy lifestyle. Their attendance at school improves significantly from their starting point on admission and consequently they are able to make progress in education. They are fully supported to prepare for independence.

The manager provides good support and leadership to staff and is committed to the continuous improvement of the service that is given to young people. The management monitoring arrangements are effective and ensure that good standards are maintained and the welfare of young people is promoted.

One requirement and two recommendations have been made as a result of this inspection. These relate to notifications, risk assessments and one aspect of the maintenance 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 that all relevant persons are notified without delay if any of the events listed in column 1 of the table in Schedule 5 takes place. (Regulation 30 (1) Schedule 5)	07/05/2013

Recommendations

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

- ensure that children's safety and welfare are promoted, specifically ensure that all risk assessments are sufficiently detailed to protect young people (NMS 4.1)
- ensure that the home is well maintained, specifically that damage to the wall is repaired. (NMS 10.3)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people are well cared for in a warm and nurturing environment and they make good progress overall. They have positive relationships with staff and they report that staff really help them. One young person said 'staff have helped me in every way.' The relationships they have with staff enable young people to feel settled in their home and support their growing sense of self-esteem and confidence.

Young people's level of attendance and engagement with education greatly improves from their starting point on admission to the home. This enables them to maximise their opportunity to achieve. Young people have aspirations and plans for their future after school. Staff encourage young people to try different activities such as going to the gym and playing football. Resources are provided to support this. Some young people take part in structured activities that are arranged by schools. These broaden young people's experiences and help to develop their confidence and skills. In the home itself, young people enjoy playing electronic games and using the computer. At other times, young people say that they prefer to 'chill' with their friends.

Young people's health needs are assessed and robust plans are put in place to make sure they met. Young people themselves have a good understanding of health issues

and they are fully supported to develop a healthy lifestyle. They are given a healthy diet and they are encouraged to exercise. They report that staff give them advice 'all the time' about health issues. Young people do not smoke which has a positive impact on their overall well-being. The home's arrangements for managing medication are effective in protecting young people and supporting their good health.

Young people keep in regular contact with family and friends outside the home who are important to them. This helps them to maintain a sense of their identity and benefits them emotionally.

Young people develop the practical and social skills they will need for independence through being involved in the daily life of the home. For example they learn how to interact positively with one another and staff; they help with the preparation of meals, and take responsibility for keeping their own rooms clean and tidy and doing their laundry. Staff help young people to think about the support they will need when they leave care and young people also plan for further education and training in order to prepare for future employment.

Quality of care

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

Young people benefit from being looked after by a consistent team of staff who have a very good understanding of their individual needs. Young people report that they feel that they are well looked and say that they get on well with staff. One young person said 'staff know about my problems and they talk to me about them. I can talk to them about anything.' Professionals and parents also make positive comments about the way young people are looked after and the progress they make. For example, one professional said 'I've seen lots of positive changes in (name) since living there. (Name) is doing really, really well' and a parent wrote '(name) is doing well. He has calmed down. Staff have helped (name) feel responsible'. Staff work very closely with families and professionals from other agencies to ensure that young people are safe, make progress and have access to additional services or resources they need.

Detailed individual placement plans are developed in close consultation with young people. These ensure that young people's assessed needs are known and enable staff to work consistently to meet them. Plans are routinely monitored and updated to reflect young people's changing needs and the progress that they make.

Young people have individual key work sessions with staff and regular house meetings. They are supported to attend their care reviews and to contribute to the meetings. These arrangements enable young people to be involved in all the decisions that are made about their care and the running of the home. Young people know how to make a complaint and they say that they believe that staff deal with their complaints properly. They feel they are listened to and that their views count and they can identify things that have changed as a result of discussions with staff.

For example, one young person reported that staff had listened to them at an education meeting and their timetable had been changed. This has had a positive impact on the young person's engagement with education and therefore on their progress.

Care staff promote and reward positive behaviour in order to help young people to learn to manage conflict appropriately and behave in a socially acceptable way. Young people report that they 'get on' with one another and generally they behave well towards one another and staff.

Education is valued by staff who work hard to help young people to attend regularly and to achieve. Some young people struggled to engage with education before they came to live in the home. Staff have been successful in helping them to significantly improve their attendance over time. Staff contribute fully to young people's education reviews and other meetings. This means that they have a very good understanding of young people's targets and plans and can work consistently with schools to help young people to reach them. Education staff confirm that the manager and staff work very well with them and comment positively on the support young people are given to help them to achieve. One professional said 'this is a good placement for this young person. Staff work very well with school, which helps them.'

Young people benefit from living in a comfortable, homely environment. They report that they like their home. They are supported to personalise their own rooms and to help to choose decorations for communal areas. This encourages them to have a sense of ownership of their home. Overall, the home is comfortably furnished and is generally well maintained. At this inspection, there was one area of recent damage to a wall on the stairs. Plans are in place to repair this.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people are cared for safely. They say that they feel safe in the home and that staff give them advice about personal safety. Families and professionals agree that young people are protected. Young people and staff report that there is no bullying. This helps young people to feel secure.

Staff have a good understanding of the vulnerabilities of the young people in their care. They develop individual risk management plans that identify strategies for keeping them safe. In general these plans are very detailed. However, one specific plan lacks sufficient detail to clearly demonstrate how young people are being protected.

Although some young people return late to the home on occasion, they rarely go missing. Young people let staff know where they are going when they are away from the home and staff keep in touch with them by phone. Risk assessments identify what actions staff should take in the event that a young person does not return at the agreed time. Close liaison between staff and relevant agencies, such as social

workers, the police and the local safeguarding team, ensure that information is appropriately shared and action taken if a young person is assessed as being at risk in the community.

When they are admitted to the home, some young people have had a history of demonstrating challenging behaviour. Staff are trained to manage behaviour effectively in order to keep young people safe without the need for physical intervention. As a result of the way they are cared for and the relationships they have with staff, young people's behaviour improves over time. Consequently, there are very few incidents of restraint. This benefits all the young people, contributing to their sense of safety in the home.

The manager and staff ensure that the home is kept safe and free from hazards. This is achieved through regular checks on the home itself as well as on equipment and installations. Young people take part in fire evacuation drills so that they understand what to do in an emergency.

Young people are further protected by the home's robust staff recruitment practices. These ensure that all staff are vetted and assessed as suitable before they start work in the home. The arrangements for checking visitors also contribute to keeping young people safe by ensuring that unsuitable individuals are unable to gain access to the home.

Leadership and management

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

The home is managed effectively. The manager is experienced and provides good leadership to the team. He regularly monitors the quality of care in the home and the progress that young people make. This is achieved through regular checks on records and discussions with young people and their families, staff and professionals involved with the home. A senior manager in the organisation also visits the home on a monthly basis to monitor the care that is given to young people. The home's manager uses the information that is obtained through this system of checks to drive improvements in the service. The home's development plan has clear and achievable goals and objectives for the future of the service.

Young people benefit from being cared for by a team of staff who are committed and enthusiastic. Care staff are qualified or working to gain a relevant qualification and have regular training. Consequently, they are able to develop and maintain the knowledge and skills they require to meet the needs of the young people they care for. The provider and manager make sure that staff are made aware of any changes to legislation to keep their knowledge up to date.

Care staff feel well supported. They have regular supervision and there are frequent team meetings. These arrangements provide them with opportunities to discuss the care of young people and their own and the team's training and development needs. The manager and staff work well together and there is good communication within

the team. This benefits young people as it provides consistency of care. This in turn supports their progress.

The home's Statement of Purpose is clear and detailed and accurately reflects how the home works. It is reviewed regularly to ensure that it is up to date. The young person's guide to the service is written in a format that is appropriate to the young people who are looked after. It provides them with good information about the routines of the home and tells them how they will be cared for. The guide also gives them information about their rights in care.

One recommendation was made at the last inspection. This is met. Young people have an identified education placement and there have been significant improvements in their level of attendance and engagement. This has enabled them to make good progress in education from their starting point on admission to the home.

The manager has a clear understanding of the events that need to be notified to the relevant authorities in order to ensure that the home complies with the children's homes regulations. The home has a good track record of ensuring that these notifications are made promptly, confirming the actions that have been taken to keep young people safe. Since the last inspection there has been one incident that was not notified to Ofsted as required. However, this event had been notified to and discussed with the local safeguarding team and there is no evidence that the safety or well-being of young people was compromised by this shortfall.

Staff maintain full records about young people that contribute to their understanding of their history in care and their time in the home. Young people are supported to read and contribute to their records to ensure that these reflect their views. All information that is held about young people is stored securely to protect their right to confidentiality.

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.