

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Elaine Cray
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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 home is part of a private children's care organisation and is registered to accommodate two young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties. The home offers short, long-term and emergency placements.

Overall effectiveness

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

Children and young people receive personalised and well planned care. They make excellent progress at the home. They grow in confidence and develop positive identities and this significantly contributes to their preparation for transition through adolescence and into adult life.

Children and young people's behaviour, health, education, social and safeguarding needs are supported with an effective care planning framework. A key strength of the service is effective inter-agency liaison with regards to keeping children and young people safe and supporting their education.

Promoting equality and diversity is a good feature of this service. Children and young people develop emotional resilience and good self-esteem. Staff understand the children and young people's needs and are proactive in identifying obstacles to improvement. Staff implement meaningful strategies and promote positive relationships. Children and young people are engaged in their placements and plans for their future. Clear efforts are made to listen to children and young people's concerns and promote ways for their wishes, feelings and views to be included in the running of the service.

The management and staff team implement procedures and practices that are established and well monitored. The quality assurance processes maintain existing standards and the management team have a clear focus on improvement of the service. However, there are some shortfalls in record keeping and availability of some working documents. The home's Statement of Purpose does not reflect the service provided to children and young people with moderate learning difficulties. The staff rota is not specific to the actual home or available at the service. The service is yet to make the joint protocol with the police for when young people go missing from care available at the home.

There is one statutory requirement and two recommendations set as a result of this inspection.

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
4 (2001)	ensure the home's Statement of Purpose includes particulars about the range of needs of children the home accommodates. (Regulation 4 (1) Schedule 1.8 (c))	03/01/2012

Recommendations

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

- make available the records of staff working in the home and ensure the records demonstrate staffing levels for the service (NMS 17.2)
- ensure the home's missing from care procedures are compatible with and have regard to the local authority's Runaway and Missing from Home and Care protocols. (NMS 5.6)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Children and young people make excellent progress while living at this home. They grow and mature due to a structured behaviour management framework and good staff relationships. Children and young people thrive because staff have an excellent understanding of their needs. Children and young people, including those with moderate learning difficulties, develop good relationships and work towards their potential because they are supported with meaningful support strategies and communication processes.

The significant improvements enjoyed by children and young people include improved attendance at school and college, improved behaviour, not going missing from care, better ways to stay safe, getting on better with families and enjoying positive relationships. Young people grow in confidence and develop emotional resilience to work towards their potential and successfully move into transition as a young adult. They broaden their horizons and develop skills with a wide variety of activities which are supported by staff. Young people also have opportunities to develop their confidence with a programme of independence skills. They are prepared with opportunities to budget, cook and how to positively manage their own free time. Young people move into young adulthood with developing maturity, an awareness of maintaining trusting relationships and how to take more responsibility

for their futures.

Children and young people understand the importance and impact of education. They are able to work through challenging times in attending school and college due to effective staff support, practical organisation and excellent liaison with school and college staff. Social workers are very complimentary about the support received by young people, commenting that 'the opportunity and support to attend education was key to progress'. Success is demonstrated by young people continuing further education courses and apprenticeships once they have left the home.

Children and young people thrive and grow in maturity because they are treated with respect. They grow in confidence, develop resilience and are more tolerant of others because there is a clear assessment and they are given good opportunities to make sense of their backgrounds, experiences and their behaviours. They are cared for in an environment that identifies, develops and celebrates difference.

Children and young people enjoy good and improved health. They are encouraged to understand and be proactive about their own medical and health needs. Children and young people are enabled to develop an awareness of how emotional and mental well-being is integral to their health and they develop a positive sense of well-being and positive self-esteem. Children and young people also understand how lifestyle choices can impact on their health. They lead healthier lifestyles including balanced eating, exercise and the impact of medication on behaviour.

Children and young people feel good about themselves and improve behaviour because they feel listened to. They say they can express their views, feelings and wishes and are given meaningful time to talk to their key workers and staff. They are involved in their placements, their care planning and the running of the home. They enjoy weekly meetings about planning the week ahead and to discuss what is happening in the house. They are empowered because they understand the reason for their placements and plans for their futures.

Quality of care

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

Staff promote a nurturing and stable environment for children and young people to develop and thrive in. The positive relationships and effective day-to-day organisation of the home demonstrate that all staff are consistently concerned with the welfare, education and progress of children and young people. Social workers' comments about how children and young people are looked after include 'very impressed', 'they never give up' and '10 out of 10'.

Children and young people are looked after by a competent and well trained staff team. There are effective frameworks for care, education support and behaviour management. Children and young people develop in maturity because staff maintain meaningful and respectful relationships. Their behaviours improve due to staff implementing clear expectations and boundaries.

Care and education planning, risk management procedures and behaviour management plans are comprehensive. Children and young people receive consistent care because their care planning is practically detailed and gives clarity to how staff are to support them. Children and young people are supported by staff who have a good understanding of equality and diversity, including gender, social, economic, cultural and religious backgrounds. This service presents key strengths in promoting meaningful routines and communication strategies for young people with moderate learning difficulties. Staff provide an environment where children and young people can express themselves and also explore and develop their awareness of diversity, tolerance and equality.

Children and young people invest in and value their care plans because staff include them at all stages of drawing up, implementing and reviewing the plans. Plans are meaningful because staff understand and respect how young people's challenges and experiences have impacted on them. Social workers are very pleased with how the staff work in partnership and consistently implement and communicate about the plans and progress for children and young people. Consultation with children and young people is promoted with regular house meetings and key working contact. The staff team's knowledge and the positive relationships are key to managing behaviour and enabling young people to develop and achieve.

Children and young people do well in education because their education plans provide them with effective packages to support their learning processes and enable them to aspire to their potential. Care and education planning is expanded to include independence preparation and exploring further education and employment opportunities. Staff provide good support to young people who are embarking on their transition to young adulthood and independent living. There is good assessment and review of plans and young people are part of this process. Records show that young people make clear progress living at the home.

Children and young people are supported by comprehensive health and medical assessments and healthcare plans. They learn to take responsibility for and understand their own health needs because staff demonstrate good knowledge and awareness of health issues relating to lifestyle choices. The staff maintain close liaison with the local medical centre and other health support agencies in order to provide informed and appropriate care. Staff have a good awareness of the procedures for the safe and effective administration of medication, including how to support young people to manage their own medication. Healthy eating is promoted and menus are balanced, taking into account children and young people's choices and a multi-cultural perspective. Young people are encouraged to plan, shop for and cook their own meals.

Children and young people know how to make a complaint because information is contained in the young people's guide and displayed in the house. Information about the external agencies children and young people can contact is also on display and young people say staff have explained how to raise concerns and talk to individuals and agencies outside of the home.

The house is generally well maintained and staff continue to address the refurbishment after a period of significant physical damage. The home provides children and young people with a good environment to meet their needs, including a newly fitted kitchen and recently decorated and carpeted bedrooms. Staff make clear efforts to make the house comfortable and homely and young people are involved in choosing items and décor for the house. There are good levels of privacy for children and young people; they have their own bedroom key and privacy lock for the bathroom.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Children and young people say they feel safe and there are significant improvements in their behaviour and welfare. They have good relationships with staff, can talk about concerns and have no concerns about bullying. All social workers expressed a clear confidence in the home's ability to keep young people safe and develop children and young people's own abilities to make safer choices. Social workers report significant improvements in children and young people's behaviour, risk taking activities and going missing from care.

Children and young people are cared for in a safe and secure environment. Levels of safety are effective because the robust and regularly reviewed policies and procedures are implemented by well trained and competent staff. Safeguarding strategies are clear and structured. The joint missing from care protocol as drawn up between the police and the provider is yet to be made available in this service. However, there are excellent strategies to monitor risk taking activities and implementation of individual going missing from care protocols for all children and young people.

Attention to the supervision of children and young people is detailed and consistent. Children and young people are safer because they are actively discouraged from accessing risk taking activities and associations. Their ability to manage their own safety is improved as they are consistently reminded and enabled to make positive choices and lead safer lifestyles. Risk assessments are in place and cross reference into practical and meaningful behaviour management plans. Strategies to manage behaviours and safeguard children and young people focus on safety but also ensure they all have opportunities to reach their potential and achieve. Children and young people invest in plans to change and improve behaviour because strategies are creative, using individually agreed and meaningful incentives and rewards.

Children and young people understand and are motivated by the praise and rewards they receive for good behaviour. They say the staff and expectations are 'very fair'. Staff show their pride in the achievements and progress of the children and young people, including incentives and arranging special trips and outings as rewards.

Records show the sanctions used when things do not go so well for them are fair. Staff are trained in behaviour management, including physical intervention. There are few incidents resulting in physical interventions and there is a clear ethos that such action is only taken as a last resort. Staff maintain detailed and accountable records.

Children and young people are protected with robust recruitment processes, including checks on agency staff who come to work at the home. Visitors are checked, vetted and monitored. All staff are aware of their own roles and responsibilities and other agencies involved in keeping children and young people safe. They receive training on safeguarding children. The manager and staff understand the need for effective links and working partnerships with agencies, including the police. The home's ability to keep children and young people safe is reinforced by positive comments from the Local Authority Designated Officer for the safeguarding team.

Children and young people live in a safe environment. Health and safety checks are an integral part of the daily running of the home. Children and young people know what to do in the event of a fire.

Leadership and management

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

This service had no statutory requirements or recommendations from the last inspection. Issues arising from recent damage to the physical environment have been quickly addressed and there is a clear commitment to managing and improving the home. Internal monitoring by the manager is thorough with a comprehensive system to regularly review care plans, risk assessments, records and the daily running of the home. External monitoring of the service is regularly carried out. There is clear commitment to identifying good practice, shortfalls and further areas for development. The service has a development plan to ensure all areas of the home continue to develop and improve.

The home provides children and young people with a stable, safe and nurturing environment. There are clear policies and procedures. Daily briefings and good staff communication contribute to the running of the service. While the home's Statement of Purpose reflects facilities and staffing arrangements, there is no information about the current services provided to children and young people with moderate learning difficulties.

Staffing arrangements for this home are managed alongside arrangements for another nearby home run by the same Registered Manager. There is a focus on maintaining continuity of staffing and a main staffing rota shows shift patterns are organised according to the needs of the children and young people. There are instances of lone working in the home and these arrangements are appropriately risk assessed and relevant to the needs and occupancy of the children and young people living at the home. While staffing levels are adequate, the records relating to staffing

in this specific home include arrangements for another and separately registered home owned by the provider. A staff rota documenting the planned and actual staffing arrangements in this service is not readily available in the home.

The staff team for this service is well balanced with good levels of experience and competency. They are enthusiastic and work closely as a team. Staff feel supported and are given opportunities to develop their skills. Staff say they are supported with consistent and regular supervision. They are given good opportunities to formally discuss their role, professional development and the impact of working with children and young people with challenging needs. Their ongoing professional development is supported by a comprehensive training programme.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.