

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Maureen Hamer
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Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	03/03/2011
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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 children's home is operated by a national independent children's services provider. The home is registered to accommodate children and young people who have emotional and behavioural difficulties. In particular, they may have a history of trauma, abuse or family breakdown. Short to medium-term placements may be offered. Several staff hold qualifications in counselling and the home is supported by a registered psychotherapist.

Overall effectiveness

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

Young people benefit from receiving very good individualised care. Young people's progress is excellent. The caring and committed staff work as an effective team to ensure that there is consistent practice. This culture enables young people to develop confidence and make positive progress in most aspects of their lives.

Care plans are comprehensive and are regularly reviewed and amended in line with young people's progress. A shortfall in dating and signing some documents means that it is not always clear who the author is or the period of time it relates to. Regular supervision is not always given. However, the staff team have regular child-centred handover and team meetings which ensure that consistent care is provided and staff say that they feel very supported.

The Statement of Purpose provides a good overview of the service, however, it does not provide sufficient information regarding procedure for emergency admissions. The children's guide is known to young people but does not accurately portray the accommodation and does not state the name of the young person's Independent Reviewing Officer. This shortfall does not impact on current young people living in the home.

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
4 (2001)	ensure that the Statement of Purpose consists of a statement as to the matters listed in Schedule 1 (Regulation 4 (1) Schedule (1) (9))	06/01/2012

28 (2001)	maintain in respect of each child who is accommodated in a children's home a record in permanent form which is signed and dated by the author of each entry. (Regulation 28 (1) (c))	06/01/2012
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Recommendations

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

- update the children's guide as to how a child can contact their Independent Reviewing Officer, the Children's Rights Director and Ofsted if they wish to raise a concern with inspectors (NMS 13.5)
- provide staff with regular supervision by appropriately qualified and experienced staff. (NMS 19.4)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people make exceptional progress in this home as a result of the highly individualised support from a caring staff group. A psychologist provides staff with weekly support at their weekly child-centred team meetings. Young people have developed trusting relationships with staff and their emotional well-being has greatly improved. Young people show very positive changes in their ability to manage their emotions and take responsibility for their behaviour, this has led to a significant reduction in aggressive behaviour.

Young people's health needs are well assessed. Staff successfully work with young people to reduce and stop risk taking behaviour such as drinking alcohol. Access to local health services is encouraged to normalise life and to ensure appropriate medical assistance is readily gained to meet health problems.

Young people are actively supported to attend school and to achieve. Staff work with partners to access appropriate educational placements to meet young people's needs. The home has been successful in enabling young people who have not been attending school to access and to attend full-time placements.

A range of individualised activities are available to young people to broaden their interests and to develop their social skills. Young people have developed friendships and their self confidence has grown. Friends are able to stay at the home and this helps to normalise their life experiences.

Young people are engaged in the running of the home and in developing independence skills such as cooking and taking care of their own personalised bedroom. Young people own pets through which they successfully develop caring

responsibilities.

Contact with family and friends is highly valued and promoted to help young people to maintain important relationships. Staff are sensitive when managing supervised contact arrangements and effectively contribute to family repair. This contact helps young people to build relationships and greatly contributes to helping them to gain a good understanding of their background.

Quality of care

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

Young people benefit from positive and caring relationships with staff. The home has a culture of mutual respect in which staff listen to young people and to each other. A social worker stated: 'Staff act as role models by expressing how they feel and young people adopt this approach. There has been a reduction in aggressive behaviour. Very individualised to the young person. I have never known such an individualised service. I am so pleased they have done what they promised and they always keep in touch. They look after the young person's best interest. It has been small steps; they have helped the young person to develop trust.'

Positive behaviour plans are well established and staff are supported to be consistent in their approach. Staff positively challenge each other when there are inconsistencies in practice.

Young people are supported to put forward their views using a range of individualised communication approaches such as pictures. Young people will also use text messaging when it is too emotionally difficult to verbally express themselves this has enabled successful communication. Independent advocacy is accessed to ensure that the young people's views are gained and listened too. This information is used at their statutory reviews such as advocating on behalf of the young person. There is a high level of supervision provided to young people and a great deal of informal communication occurs between young people and their key worker. Consequently young people do not always want to participate in formal key worker sessions. However, young people's views are well known and are taken into account in all aspects of their care.

Young people know how to complain and are able to confidently do so and appropriate action is taken to manage the situation to the young person's satisfaction.

Young people are involved in their care planning. Achievable targets are set and monitored. Progress is rewarded with praise and some financial incentives. Young people respond with increased confidence in themselves and are motivated to want to do well.

Young people are encouraged to broaden their life experiences through a range of activities, such as going to the local youth club. This has contributed towards

developing confidence and friendships.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people are protected from harm and their well-being is promoted to a good standard. Staff focus on building trusting relationship with young people and this enables young people to feel safe. In addition due to consistent boundaries and individualised incentives and sanctions aggressive behaviour has diminished creating a safer environment for young people and staff.

The staff ensure that risk assessments and behaviour plans are comprehensive. They are regularly reviewed and updated. The home's nurturing and open environment has enabled young people to greatly reduce aspects of their risk taking behaviour such as going missing from care. Links with local police are in place so that in the event of a young person going missing prompt action is taken to secure the young person's return.

There is a clear approach taken to promoting positive behaviours and minimising negative behaviour. Staff receive regular training in de-escalation strategies, helping young people learn from negative behavioural events and physical intervention. The approach promotes a respectful culture in which young people are encouraged to identify when they are upset. Young people are greatly encouraged to communicate their feelings so that escalation of negative behaviour can be avoided. As a consequence of this consistent approach episodes of aggressive behaviour have greatly reduced.

Sanctions and incentives are individualised and demonstrate some effectiveness in motivating young people to act in a positive manner. The impact shows a positive impact on the young people's confidence and a reduction in the use of restraint. There is close scrutiny of all incidents of restraint and appropriate actions taken including rebuild meetings to regain positive relationships and learn from such events.

Bullying is not tolerated in this home, internet access is provided and young people are provided with protection against cyber bullying. Good staff supervision and the culture of the home leads to any intimidating behaviour being identified and young people and staff being protected.

Any matters of a safeguarding nature are dealt with in line with the home's procedures and appropriate action is taken to ensure the safety and well-being of all concerned.

Young people live in a safe and secure environment. The recruitment processes are robust and staff are well trained and supported to enable them to provide young people with a good standard of care and to promote their welfare.

Leadership and management

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

Young people's benefit from living in a well managed home. When shortfalls occur the manager is responsive and engages staff and young people to address emerging issues.

The Statement of Purpose provides a good outline of the service. However, it does not outline the policy and procedure for emergency admissions, this shortfall does not impact on young people currently in the home.

Young people are provided with a children's guide and they have informed the manager that the pictorial representations of the home are not an actual likeness, this is currently being addressed. In addition it does not contain the name of the young person's independent reviewing officer. The young people are fully aware of whom their reviewing officer is and they have regular contact with an independent reviewing officer so this has no impact on young people. However, the manager is planning to up date the guide.

The manager monitors the quality of care. Some documents are not signed or dated so this sometimes impacts on staff's ability to identify the most recent notes. However, the communication between staff is very regular and comprehensive so this does not impact on the care that young people receive.

The Regulation 33 reports which requires an objective visitor to talk to young people in the home about their care and to report on the quality of care, has recently been changed. The reports are thorough and the manager acts to improve deficits. The manager also stated that the visitor now talks to the young people: 'It's much better.'

The manager fully engages the young people and staff in the running of the home. Supervision is not always completed and the manager has made changes to ensure that supervision sessions with staff are undertaken on a regular basis. Staff state that they feel well supported by good handover meetings and weekly team meetings that are centred around the young people. The service's psychologist attends these weekly meetings to listen to issues related to the outcomes for young people. Staff find this input very helpful in supporting their practice and to achieving consistent care for young people.

The recommendation raised at the previous inspection has been addressed and all staff and young people are aware of details of any sanctions. This contributes to promoting positive behaviour.

The manager demonstrates reflective practice and has an open approach to staff. The staff have a high regard for the manager who demonstrates a high regard for young people and staff through open discussion about issues that impact on young people. This enables them to learn from practice and helps them to maintain positive

improvements in practice demonstrating capacity to improve.

Equality and diversity practice is **outstanding**.