

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Michelle Bacon
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This service is a private children's home which provides care and accommodation for up to four young people with emotional or behavioural difficulties. A registered school is also included on site.

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**.

This visit was aligned with an education inspection of the school. Young people make good progress in relation to their starting points across all aspects of their welfare and development. Young people feel their views, wishes and feelings are listened to. Care planning is highly personalised to meet the individual needs of the young people.

Young people live in a nurturing environment that provides clear and consistent boundaries. Staff in the home demonstrate a good understanding of safe working practice. High staffing ratios ensure young people receive the care and attention they need in order to feel safe. Although young people are very positive about their care, one young person did comment on the lack of female staff supporting them.

The home demonstrates a capacity for continued improvement. The manager has a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the home and is effective at tackling the weaknesses and securing improvement. However, he does not hold a qualification in management. Good monitoring scrutinises the quality of care. However, the Regulation 33 visitor does not secure the opinions of young people, parents and relatives about the standard of care provided by 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
33 (2001)	ensure the person carrying out the visit interviews, with their consent and in private, the young people accommodated, their parents, relatives and persons working in the home in order to form an opinion of the standard of care provided in the home. (Regulation 33(4)(a))	30/10/2012

Recommendations

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

- ensure the staff group who are in day-to-day contact with young people includes staff of both genders (NMS 17.10)
- ensure the registered manager has a qualification in management at least at level 5. (NMS 14.2(b))

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Outcomes for young people have improved during their time at the home. For example, young people are able to communicate their thoughts and feelings more appropriately, which has led to improvements in their behaviour. As a result, young people are forming and sustaining positive relationships with the staff and each other.

Young people's emotional and physical health is good. They benefit from attending all their health appointments and receive input from a psychologist to maintain their emotional health. Health care plans clearly identify a young person's specific health needs and the arrangements for meeting these.

Most young people attend school and are making progress from their starting point in the placement. Nevertheless, due to their past difficulties some young people's attendance is problematic. However, staff have clearly identified the needs of these young people and matched these to appropriate vocational courses. In a recent email to the home an education caseworker commented 'thanks to the staff team for their work, although it may appear small steps X (name) has come on leaps and bounds.'

Young people make a positive contribution to the home through regular key worker sessions and young people's house meetings. Young people meet regularly with the manager and their key worker to review their placement plans. This ensures their wishes and feelings are taken into account in their care planning.

Young people are benefiting from appropriate contact with family, friends and those significant to them. This means they retain a sense of identity and belonging. Contact arrangements are regularly reviewed and any concerns are feedback to a young person's placing authority.

Young people are being well prepared to develop the skills they need for independence. For example, they carry out tasks, such as planning menus, cooking and general household tasks. This increases their confidence and self-esteem as they prepare for adult life.

Quality of care

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

At the last inspection in February 2012 the home was experiencing a high level of disruption. As a result, the home now carefully considers all referrals so they only provide placements to those young people whose needs they believe they can reasonably meet.

Young people confirm they have good relationships with staff and they can choose their key workers. Young people say they enjoy the individual time they spend with their key workers. Staff use individualised positive behaviour strategies to support young people in managing conflict. As a result, young people are more settled and like living in the home.

Young people's needs are clearly identified within their placement plans. These are regularly reviewed to enable the manager and staff to monitor and evaluate young people's progress and respond to their changing needs. The home provides young people with the opportunity to engage in activities outside of the home that helps to develop their hobbies and interests, such as golf. In addition they take part in regular exercise, for example, playing football.

Staff provide an environment that supports young people's education. They work closely with teachers and other education workers to ensure young people's regular attendance; however, this has not always been successful.

Young people know how to make a complaint. Information is given to them on how they can access advocacy services outside of the home. There have been no complaints since the last inspection.

The home is in a semi-rural area which can be limiting for some young people; however, staff transport them to activities, appointments and the shops. At the time

of the last inspection there had been significant damage to the home. This has been repaired and the overall environment has improved. The home is well furnished and decorated.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people say they feel safe and there are no bullying issues. High staffing levels provide young people with a good level of supervision. However, there have been occasions when young people have chosen to go missing. The home has well defined procedures in place to ensure young people return safe and well. In addition they have strong links with the police and other agencies to promote the safety of young people. Young people's placement plans and risk assessments clearly identify any risks and how these should be managed.

Positive behaviour is promoted and staff are trained in behaviour management including the use of restraint. Records clearly demonstrate the reasons for its use. The number of restraints has reduced since the last inspection, indicating that young people are responding to their individual behaviour management plans.

The home operates safe recruitment and selection procedures to ensure young people, as far as is possible, are only cared for by suitable people. One new member of staff has been recruited since the last inspection, but they are currently working at another of the organisation's homes.

Young people live in a physically safe environment. All fire, gas and electrical equipment is serviced annually. Young people take part in regular fire drills to ensure they know how to leave the building safely in the event of a fire.

Leadership and management

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

The home is effectively managed by an experienced manager. However, the manager does not currently hold a suitable management qualification. A deputy manager, who is qualified to the National Vocational Qualification at level 4, deputises in the absence of the manager. The manager can clearly demonstrate the impact and value that living at the home has had on some young people's lives and how their life chances have improved over time; this includes improvements young people's attendance and attainment in their education.

The home can demonstrate capacity for continuing improvement, based on its performance since the last inspection, and evidence of the impact of improvements. At the interim inspection in February 2012 three requirements and six recommendations for improvements were made and have all been met. There is now a clear audit trail of any complaints. Furthermore, young people can access an

independent advocate should they not be satisfied with the outcome of their complaint. The manager ensures all significant events relating to the protection of children are notified to the appropriate authorities in accordance with Regulation 30.

The manager effectively monitors the quality and accuracy of all records and where appropriate takes action. For example, removing sanctions he does not think suitable. Furthermore, the disciplinary records give a clearer picture of a young person's behaviour leading to the use of the measure. Young people are encouraged to have their views recorded in the records kept by the home.

The home employs a sufficient number of staff who are suitably qualified and trained. However, the current deployment of staff does not fully meet the needs of the home because there is only one full time female member of staff. Staff are supported in their work through regular supervision and team meetings.

Monthly monitoring of the quality of care is completed by the manager and an external manager from one of the organisations other homes. However, the Regulation 33 monitoring visits do not include consultation with the young people, their families or social workers.

The home has a detailed Statement of Purpose that clearly outlines the home's aims and objectives and how they work with young people.

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.