

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Alicea Churchward
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Date of last inspection	08/02/2013
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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 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 **adequate**.

There have been some improvements in relation to most of the young people's outcomes since their admission to the home. Young people say that the home is a safe place to live and that they feel safe and protected.

Young people benefit from positive support from staff who are committed to promoting positive outcomes for individual young people.

Areas for improvement have been clearly identified throughout this report to improve the overall effectiveness of the home. These relate to: ensuring the educational outcomes for all young people are promoted, developing the quality of the service; improving activities to assist young people to further develop confidence in their skills; removing restrictions placed upon the use of the telephone; enabling access to external complaints procedures, particularly with regard to placing authorities; ensuring the future arrangements for each individual young person are reflected in pathway plans; training for staff in supporting contact arrangements; reviewing the arrangements for leading shifts; providing young people with details for their reviewing officers and the Children Rights Director and ensuring their views are recorded when there has been a sanction or restraint.

Breaches of regulation are currently having an impact upon one young person but overall the young people are positive about most aspects of their care and support 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
24 (2001)	ensure that children accommodated in the home are enabled to make a complaint (Regulation 24 (6)(a))	21/06/2013
18 (2001)	ensure the home promotes the educational achievement of young people accommodated in a children's home, in particular by ensuring that the routine of the home is organised so as to further young people's participation in education, including regular attendance at school (Regulation 18(1)(b))	13/09/2013
15 (2001)	ensure that children are provided at all reasonable times with access to the following facilities which they may use without reference to persons working in the home; a telephone on which to make and receive telephone calls in private and facilities to send and receive post (Regulation 15 (4)(a)(b))	05/07/2013
34 (2001)	ensure that the monitoring of the home frequently obtains the views of young people's parents and placing authorities; to improve the quality of care. (Regulation 34 (3))	30/08/2013

Recommendations

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

- include contact details for the Children's Rights Director, Ofsted and independent reviewing officer details in the children's guide (NMS 13.5)
- ensure where any sanctions, disciplinary measures or restraint are used, young people are encouraged to have their views recorded in the records kept by the home (NMS 3.18)
- ensure that the home contributes to the development of pathway plans and works collaboratively with young people's social worker or personal adviser in implementing the plan (NMS 12.2)
- ensure that children develop their emotional, intellectual, social creative and physical skills through the accessible and stimulating environment created by the home with regard to activities (NMS 7.1)
- ensure that staff have appropriate training, supervision and support if they are required to supervise and facilitate contact (NMS 9.2)
- ensure that staff members who are placed in charge of the home and other staff at particular times (e.g. as leaders of staff shifts) have substantial relevant

experience of working in the home and have successfully completed their induction and probationary periods. (NMS 17.5)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **adequate**.

Young people have assigned key workers with whom they spend time discussing issues affecting them; this helps them to develop a positive self-view and emotional resilience. There are also opportunities, through other partnership agencies, to meet with counsellors and undertake individual work; this enables young people to have an understanding of their background.

Young people's physical and emotional needs are promoted. Staff ensure that referrals are made to relevant health professionals, including specialised services if necessary. Staff also support young people to understand their health needs and how to maintain a healthy lifestyle; this means that young people can make informed decisions about their health and development.

Staff are proactive and consistent in supporting the educational achievement of most young people, engaging with their schools and successfully promoting their attendance generally. Young people benefit from having a school on site to offer additional support to young people to ensure they attain outcomes in keeping with their abilities; most young people have achieved as a result of the support they have received. However, it is not clear what is being done about those young people who persistently refuse to attend and attain through a dedicated educational programme. The home has secured college placements for older young people who are moving back to their local authority areas in the near future.

Young people have contact with their families; this ensures that their cultural identity is maintained. Staff actively facilitate and support contact at long distances as some young people are placed at quite a distance from their own local authorities; this is to their credit, but staff have not had training in order to do this.

Young people exercise choice and independence in the clothes and personal requisites that they buy and have their basic needs met. The home endeavours to prepare young people and equip them with independent living skills including maintaining good personal hygiene, budgeting, shopping and having responsibility for keeping both the communal areas and their own bedrooms clean and tidy. Young people have pathway plans in place. However, these do not always reflect the current circumstances of each young person; for example, they are not aware of where to obtain financial and assistance when they leave the home. In one case a young person's plan is to leave in a few weeks' time and no accommodation has been found in the area of their choice and the arrangements for financial support to them is not clear; in this circumstance the pathway plan is not up to date with the actual plans in place.

Quality of care

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

Relationships between staff and young people are good. Young people say that staff support them in all areas of their plans and that they are encouraged to behave appropriately. Young people are encouraged to take responsibility for their behaviour, in a way that is appropriate to their age and abilities.

Young people are actively encouraged to attend their reviews and make a contribution to their care and placement plans. Staff actively seek the views of young people about the daily running of the home and through regular young people's meetings. Young people are helped to understand why it may not be possible to act upon their wishes.

Young people do not fully understand how to make a complaint to their placing authority. There is a clear procedure in place which is included in the children's guide about how to make a complaint within the service but this does not include information for external advocacy such as their own independent reviewing officer details or details about the Children's Rights Director and Ofsted if they wish to raise concerns with an inspector. Young people say that they can speak to staff in the home if they have any worries or concerns and in one case one young person has benefitted from advice from an external advocate.

Access by young people to the home's telephone is restricted; this is because young people have to ask staff to use it. There are no consents to this from placing social workers that makes clear that contact restrictions are in place, for example, due to safeguarding concerns. Some young people benefit from having a mobile telephone but the home does not provide a credit allowance and young people have to purchase their own credit with their personal allowance; this means that young people cannot use a telephone to make or receive calls in private if they have no credit.

Young people have good placement plans in place. They are regularly updated to reflect day-to-day arrangements. Young people are consulted about their plans. Staff have a clear understanding of routines and how to care for individual young people in line with their respective plans. The home is in the process of obtaining additional information to meet cultural and religious needs; this is in its infancy and the service accepts that there is more work to do in this area. However, young people's needs are adequately met.

The home provides a healthy environment and young people are able to access the services and support they need. Staff encourage a healthy lifestyle and discourage young people from substance misuse.

The home provides a range of activities for young people. Young people are not regularly engaged in the activities provided; this can impact on young people's ability to develop confidence in their skills.

The home is appropriately located, designed and maintained. Young people benefit from spacious accommodation which is homely, well-furnished and has large, well-maintained gardens; the property does not stand out as a children's home.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people report that they are safe and protected, they say they like the staff in the home and get on well with the other young people. There is no bullying in the home and young people confirm that this is the case. Staff discuss issues of safety regularly with young people who say that they would speak with staff in the home if they felt that they were not safe. Individual risk assessments are in place which tell staff what action to take if young people are engaging in risk taking behaviours.

Staff are clear about their role in protecting young people and know about the organisation's whistle blowing policy. All of these matters contribute to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of young people in the home.

Most of the young people have achieved placement stability in this home; they rarely go missing and this has improved since their admission to the home. The home records any absences clearly and there is a good policy for staff to follow in this event.

There have been very few restraints in the home. Positive behaviour is promoted. Staff are trained in positive behaviour management. Staff use de-escalation strategies successfully through their good relationships with the young people. Sanctions are few in number and young people say that the rules are fair; although young people's views are not routinely obtained in the record.

The environment is physically safe and appropriately secure. Risk assessments of the whole home's environment are carried out, to identify any potential sources of harm to young people. Assessments are recorded in writing and regularly reviewed. All checks of equipment and installations are regularly conducted to further ensure the safety of the premises.

Leadership and management

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

A number of requirements and recommendations were issued at the time of the last inspection. At that time a new manager had been appointed. The manager has submitted an application to register as the manager and this process is underway. The manager has been in post for approximately three months and is in the process of reviewing systems and the quality of care delivery.

Improvements are noted in respect of: documentary shortfalls in respect of young people's meeting minutes; the sanctions record; minutes of statutory reviews and

improving the overall quality of records maintained by the home. Some progress is noted in educational outcomes for young people; however, a requirement to ensure that the home is organised to further young people's participation in education has been carried forward. This is to ensure that all young people resident participate, enjoy and achieve through education.

Two recommendations are carried forward to ensure that young people's views are recorded in the sanctions book and to further develop resources in respect of meeting the cultural and religious needs of each young person; this is underway and the home can currently demonstrate that they meet young people's needs adequately.

The registered person actively and regularly monitors the quality of care provided, including consultation with young people about their welfare and the quality of their care. This is good because this gives young people an additional source of advocacy and regular visits ensure that the home is effectively managed. The home has yet to obtain views of parents and placing authorities to inform the development plan and needs to then incorporate these views in improving the quality of care provided.

The Statement of Purpose and children's guide accurately sets out the aims and objectives of the home for children, placing authorities and parents; this ensures that all parties are clear about what care and services the home offers. However, the Children's guide does not outline the contact details of the Children's Rights Director or young people's independent reviewing officers.

Young people benefit from a staff group who are skilled, well-trained and capable. Staff employed are suitably qualified. Staff have access training which enables them to keep up-to-date with professional practice. Staff deployed to each shift are sufficient to meet the needs of young people. However, there are times when staff who lead shifts have not completed their probationary periods; this means that they do not have substantial relevant experience of working in the home, although this is not having an impact upon young people.

The home reports significant events relating to the protection of young people to the appropriate authorities. This ensures appropriate action can be taken to keep young people safe.

Record keeping in the home has improved. Information is accessible and young people's records are clear and stored securely. However, plans for the young people's futures are not up to date in each case; in particular pathway plans.

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.