

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Heather Chaplin / Linda Bond
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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

The home provides care and accommodation for up to two young people of either gender, who may have emotional or behavioural difficulties.

Overall effectiveness

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

The inspection took place at a difficult time for the home, with a new manager recently arrived in post after the home had a long period without a Registered Manager. This has impacted on the leadership and management section of this report.

One requirement and eight recommendations have been made. None of the issues raised are in themselves very serious, but taken together, they show that there is a need for positive leadership for the staff and young people.

Young people are appreciative and enthusiastic about the care they receive and say that they have made very good progress. One of the home's strengths is providing individual support to young people.

Staff work very hard to help and support young people. They provide guidance on health and diet, safety, education, independence and contact. Young people have their cultural and identity needs met very well. Staff are well-trained to meet young people's needs and new staff receive good quality support from the new manager. Staff recruitment is sound and safe; training is good and new staff feel very well supported. They are positive and motivated; some said it was the most rewarding job they had ever done.

Areas for further development are all related to inconsistency in management and consequently there is a need for improved monitoring. The home has effective safeguarding measures in place, but staff have a limited understanding of how these work in practice. For example, two 'over-18' DVDs were found in the home. Some logs and records are not always recorded appropriately. Now that a new manager is in place, there are already some signs of improvement, for example in staff supervision and team meetings.

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)	supply a copy of the children's guide to HMCI and on admission, to each child accommodated in the home (regulation 4 (5))	14/11/2011

Recommendations

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

- continue to work towards improving the quality and cleanliness of the home environment (NMS 10.3)
- ensure that all staff are aware of the provisions made for internet safety and that only age-appropriate films are available in the home (NMS 4.4)
- ensure that fire drills are carried out in accordance with company policy and the recommendations of the local fire and rescue service, including conducting drills at night (NMS 10.9)
- obtain an up-to-date health care plan for young people which relates to the present placement (NMS 6.5)
- ensure that homely remedies used by staff are stored and recorded separately from those used by young people (NMS 6.13)
- ensure that management monitoring continues during periods when there is no Registered Manager in post (NMS 21.5)
- ensure that recording is sequential, comprehensive and regularly monitored (NMS 21.2)
- ensure that staff are regularly supervised and that team meetings take place even when there is no Registered Manager in post. (NMS 19.4)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people have made very good progress since their arrival in the home. They say 'this is the best home I have ever been in...the staff are brilliant'.

Young people are well-aware of their health and fitness needs and the importance of a well balanced diet, which will help to optimise their growth and development. They have a mature approach to taking medicines and have learned to take responsibility for their own health by seeking advice appropriately. Any emotional difficulties can

be helped through the company's commissioned psychological service. Young people are very much part of the local community and enjoy positive relationships with other young people in the area. They benefit from free time, which enables them to meet friends and enjoy shared activities.

Although some young people have chosen not to attend school, they have clear plans for the future; for example, attending college and learning new skills. Young people receive home tuition and are able to engage with this to ensure that their educational needs are met as far as possible.

Young people enjoy regular and positive contact with family members as well as with their friends. This helps to ensure that they keep in touch with their local area and maintain important family ties.

Young people receive sound advice and support in order to make the transition to the next phase in their lives. They are able to manage a budget and cook for themselves to help ensure that they can live independently.

Quality of care

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

Young people report that the quality of care is 'really, really good'. They settled in the home very quickly and have found the staff to be helpful and supportive. The quality of relationships between staff and young people is one of the home's strengths. Young people enjoy highly personalised care, which meets their needs well.

The home operates an effective key worker system. Keyworker sessions may not always be formally recorded, but young people confirm that staff are always available to help and advise, so it is clear that the work itself is completed. Staff meet together at the end of each shift to ensure that relevant information is correctly conveyed to the incoming team. Young people say that they are consulted regularly and that on one occasion, they were present during part of a hand-over meeting, which they found useful.

Young people are well aware that they may raise a complaint about the home, but have not done so to date. The company has a clear and effective complaints procedure, to help ensure that there is accountability and that young people can have any concerns investigated.

There are effective care plans which provide all the necessary information to enable staff to meet young people's needs. One local authority health care plan was drawn up in 2009 for a previous placement. The operations manager has discussed this with the placing authority, but an up-to-date health care plan has not yet been provided. Medical consent forms are signed by a person with parental responsibility, to ensure that young people can access prompt medical attention when needed.

Culture and identity information is well recorded on young people's files to help ensure that staff are aware of any issues and special needs. The promotion of equality and diversity is good, with individualised care which puts the young person at the heart of all the home's functions.

Young people have access to a range of activities, but are at an age when interactions with their peers is more important than organised trips. The company has its own educational provision, which young people have recently chosen not to attend, so home tuition is provided. There are colleges and mainstream schools in the area which may be able to meet young people's needs.

The home is secure and generally well maintained and has homely rooms, although there are signs of wear and tear in places. For example, the lounge rug is stained in places and the stair carpet on the upper stairs has threadbare patches. The back garden has improved over the past two years with a small lawn and an area of decking, but the front garden has not yet reached its full potential. Young people have decorated their own bedrooms very well and these are attractive, with sufficient furniture to meet their needs.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people say that they feel safe in this home. They are effectively protected through good policies and procedures, although staff are not always aware of how these operate in practice. The company has sound child protection guidelines, informed by locally agreed procedures. Staff spoken to all knew how to respond to children and young people making disclosures of alleged abuse. They received regularly updated training until approximately 18 months ago, when their training provider ceased to run child protection courses, but the training programme has recently restarted.

Young people have access to the internet and there is a safe system in place to monitor its use. Staff did not seem to be aware of this, nor how to enable the young people to use the telephone in the lounge, which has preset numbers and cannot be used for any other calls. Two 18-rated DVDs were in the lounge, three years outside the age range for the young people in the home. Staff thought that they might have been brought into the home by other young people, but had not noticed them. The company has sound anti-bullying policies. There is currently no bullying in the home.

The home does well to avoid any physical interventions; none have taken place there since 2009. The only recent restraint took place in school. There are appropriate logs for sanctions, complaints and significant events. The absence without authority log has not always been recorded effectively; for example, one entry is out of sequence and one absence noted on file is not in the log at all.

The company has an effective staff recruitment strategy and manages this process

safely. All staff files seen contained the information required by Schedule 2 of the Children's Homes Regulations 2001 to help ensure that young people are protected from unsuitable prospective employees.

The home is physically safe for able-bodied young people and staff. It would not be suitable for anyone with a physical disability that restricted mobility, but it meets the conditions of registration and its Statement of Purpose. There are effective risk assessments in place for individual young people, activities, the premises and fire hazards. These are updated regularly.

Fire safety checks are carried out weekly, but fire drills have not been conducted in line with company policy, which states they should be monthly. Fire drills are not regularly carried out at night to provide young people and staff with practice on vacating the building when they have been asleep.

Leadership and management

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

The home has not benefited from a permanent manager in post for some time. This has impacted on the quality of management monitoring, supervision and team meetings, particularly during the period May to September 2011. The home now has a new Registered Manager designate, who has brought about some positive changes since her arrival. For example, supervision and team meetings are now taking place regularly.

During the intervening period, there has been an acting manager, who was heavily committed elsewhere in another role. A member of staff has been in day-to-day charge of the home and has managed this well, but the home has lacked a sense of consistent and coherent leadership. There has been significant improvement in supervision and monitoring over the past two months, but the new management changes are still being embedded and the full effects are not yet apparent.

The new manager has been managing an adult provision but has previous experience as a Registered Manager of a children's service. She is well qualified and has recently submitted an application to Ofsted to become the Registered Manager of this home. The new manager was on leave during the inspection, so was unable to participate.

Previous recommendations have been addressed and the home meets its Statement of Purpose well. There is a children's guide which has been seen on past inspections, but it was not accessible in the home on this occasion. The young people cannot recall receiving one. This is a legal requirement so that young people are aware of the home's objectives and rules. The children's guide also gives them access to important contact numbers for agencies that can help them.

The home has sufficient staff to care for the young people. Current staffing levels are two to one. Staff sleep in the home to provide support and supervision during the

night. Staff say that current staffing levels are sound.

Staff training is very good, with a clear induction programme. New staff are very well supported and receive supervision every two weeks initially, then monthly. Staff are motivated and enthusiastic, which helps them to be positive in their care of young people.

Recording is generally good, but there are some examples of records being out of order and not cross referenced. Day-to-day management monitoring has not been fully effective. Regulation 33 visits take place regularly and reports are routinely sent to Ofsted, so management monitoring at this level has taken place. However, some of the issues identified on this inspection have not been picked up on these visits.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.