

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Michelle Spruce
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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 is a children's home that is operated by a local authority. The home provides care for up to two young people who have significant social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Overall effectiveness

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

Young people are the focus in providing a satisfactory service that helps them to achieve positive outcomes. In relation to their starting point, young people make steady progress supported by a committed staff team. Staff work hard to provide a safe environment in which young people feel safe.

Young people are provided with a standard of care which enhances and promotes their welfare. The relationships young people have with staff and each other are sound.

The strengths of the home lie within the commitment of the staff team who strive to maximise positive outcomes for young people with complex needs focusing on behaviour management and relationships.

There are some shortfalls within the service and as a result three actions and three recommendations have been raised.

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
30 (2001)	ensure if in relation to a children's home, any of the events listed in column 1 of the table in Schedule 5 takes place, the registered person shall without delay notify the persons indicated in respect of the event in column 2 of the table (Regulation 30 (1))	30/11/2011
24 (2001)	ensure that a written record is made of any complaint, the action taken in response, and the outcome of the investigation (Regulation 24 (5))	30/11/2011

29 (2001)	maintain in the children's home the records specified in Schedule 4 and ensure that they are kept up to date; specifically item 5 of that Schedule. (Regulation 29 (1))	30/11/2011
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Recommendations

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

- ensure where any sanctions, disciplinary measures or restraint are used, children are encouraged to have their views recorded in the records kept by the home (NMS 3.18)
- ensure that sanctions and rewards for behaviour are clear, reasonable and fair and are understood by all staff and children; this is in relation to financial sanctions (NMS 3.8)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people make good progress and they are supported by a committed staff team. Young people maintain a positive self-view and staff provide experiences to actively encourage young people to feel good about themselves. This helps young people to mature and grow while developing emotional resilience.

Young people receive help to identify how they feel about what happens to them and what they want to achieve in the future. Young people maintain strong bonds which are preserved through having access to those who are significant and important to them. Staff provide a welcoming atmosphere within the home for young people to bring their friends or family.

Young people benefit from a range of services that enhance their emotional, physical and psychological well-being. Staff provide support where necessary in arranging appointments for young people in regards to their health. For example, one young person required an eye test which resulted in a new prescription. Staff provided the assistance requested from the young person without compromising the young person's ability to manage independently. This enables young people to take responsibility for their own health and well-being.

Young people achieve positive results in regards to their education and have made significant improvements in both attainment and achievement. Where there are difficulties for individuals to commit to education, staff work hard with external agencies, which significantly promotes access to education. Young people say, 'I am now back at school going for half days; carers have helped me to get back to school.' Young people are provided with adequate equipment to enhance their learning potential. As a result positive outcomes for young people are maintained.

Young people work hard to develop the skills they need to graduate into adulthood. For example, young people take an active part in contributing to the home, and plan, shop for and prepare meals. Young people are enthusiastic about their achievements in the home which benefits their self-esteem. They also take responsibility for general upkeep of the home and their bedrooms.

Quality of care

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

Young people have sound relationships with staff who care about their welfare. Staff continually encourage positive relationships and appropriate behaviour towards others. Where there are difficulties, young people benefit from good behaviour management plans that help them to develop socially acceptable behaviour. This has improved significantly in some areas. Young people who may not cope well with certain frustrations now feel able to manage their emotions in a positive way. As a result young people improve their self-image and build up emotional resilience.

Young people's thoughts, wishes and feelings are captured through regular discussion on a daily basis. Young people feel that regular meetings are not necessary and are happy to hold meetings when they feel the need. Staff are consistent at recording their views and wishes and treat each young person with respect recognising their individual needs. This empowers young people to gain confidence in taking action to be responsible for their own lives.

Detailed placement plans ensure that young people benefit from care that encompasses their cultural, religious, racial and gender needs. Young people are provided with adequate opportunities to express openly how they feel about the home and the people they live with. As a result, young people feel listened to and consulted with. Staff communicate in a sensitive manner where it is not always possible to act on the wishes of young people. Staff say, 'we have to be open and honest and explain the rules and regulations and talk to young people as individuals.'

Young people's health needs are managed effectively and they have appropriate access to external agencies which promotes their good health and well-being. Young people say they keep their medication with them. They have keys to their bedroom to keep it safe, however, there is no lockable facility for the young people to safely store the medication in their room. There are also some shortfalls in the home's policies on medication that compromise young people's safety and well-being.

Young people are supported to develop and maintain a stable approach to their education. Staff work hard to support and encourage education attendance and attainment and where there are shortfalls staff look for alternative methods to support learning.

Young people say they have accessed a variety of services which they have chosen

within their allocated budget. This helps maximise independence by providing choice and recognising cost which encourages young people to make the appropriate and informed choices.

Young people can access a telephone should they wish to speak privately to raise any concerns. External complaints, however, are not always responded to in line with the home's policy and guidance. This means outcomes are not fully explored which consequently impact young people.

Young people benefit from living in a home that is appropriately located, designed and maintained and is within good access to local amenities.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people say they feel safe and the home has clear procedures in place to safely manage potential risk. Young people say they are protected from potential bullying and know how to raise concerns through the complaints procedure. Young people also have access to an advocacy service that regularly attends the home to offer support.

Young people say their privacy is respected and they have keys to their own rooms. Risk assessments are in place to protect young people while enabling them to take reasonable risks as part of their own growth and development.

The home has effective behaviour management strategies in place that significantly reduce offending behaviour. Use of physical intervention is not required. Young people are supported in managing their behaviour through positive reward, praise and sanctions. However, records of sanctions and their effectiveness are not recorded in full detail.

Young people are protected if they go missing because the home has good links with the police and the youth offending service, which helps to support and protect young people when they go missing. Episodes of missing from home have reduced and young people say they are responded to appropriately on return. Investigations into allegations or suspicion of harm are handled fairly, quickly, and consistently. This is done in a way that provides effective protection for children, the person making the allegation, and at the same time supports the person who is the subject of the allegation.

Young people are protected by a clear recruitment and vetting procedure which reduces the risk of unsuitable people having access to young people. Young people benefit from a stable staff team, which means they continue to be provided with consistent support from staff who know them well.

Young people are protected because they take part in regular fire drills; this ensures

they know the correct procedures in the event of an emergency. The environment is physically safe and secure and takes into account of the needs of young people cared for in the home.

Leadership and management

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

Young people live in a home that is suitably managed by a dedicated staff team who work with the manager to maintain the home to a satisfactory standard. The current Registered Manager is absent, although arrangements for cover are provided by a manager from another home. This inspection identifies some impact in record keeping, however, young people remain the focus in receiving good care.

Staff receive appropriate mandatory and additional training to improve their skills. Staff understand the needs of young people and are skilled and competent to deliver the required tailored support in line with young people's individual needs. Staff receive monthly supervision and benefit from an annual appraisal and are kept up to date with professional and legal developments. The staffing levels are appropriate to support young people. The home is adequately resourced, indicating the financial viability of the provider.

The home is monitored by the manager and externally monitored by an independent person. Young people are consulted with during the independent visits and are able to express their views and opinions on their care. However there are some discrepancies between the policies and how they are implemented in practice which are not being identified during visits. For example, the medication policy states how to record the receipt of homely remedies; however, this does not happen in practice. Potentially this compromises young people's welfare and does not ensure practice is accountable.

Overall notifications are well managed and appropriate parties are notified of significant events. On one occasion Ofsted was not appropriately notified regarding a serious accident resulting in a breach of regulation. However all other parties, such as the local authority, were appropriately notified ensuring young people's welfare was not compromised.

The home is maintained to a safe and secure standard. The manager ensures that health and safety requirements are met through robust and regular review and monitoring of such matters. This ensures young people, staff and visitors are provided with a safe place to live, work and visit.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.