

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	22/05/2013
Inspector	Rachel Ruth Britten
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	21/01/2013
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to four young people with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. The home is privately owned and the organisation operates other children's homes in the area.

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**.

Young people make good progress in relation to their starting points across all aspects of their welfare and development: physical, social, emotional and behavioural. This is underpinned by effective, high quality support from staff and the manager. Care planning and practice are personalised well to ensure that the individual needs of each young person are met.

Staff in the home demonstrate a generally good understanding of safe care practice and take a proportionate, well planned approach to each young person's risks. The boundaries and expectations about group living are followed and young people confirm that they feel safe here. However, a few shortfalls arose both in practice and procedure when a significant incident occurred, some of which were promptly identified by the manager at the time. Staff have learnt from this incident. Overall, behaviour incidents and unsafe, risk taking behaviour are virtually non-existent in the home at present, due to staff's positive and appropriate care.

The new manager is working effectively with a new shift system and a reduced staff team, some of whom are new to social care. He is highly committed to securing improvement and has succeeded in developing the home and tackling past weaknesses. He is competent at monitoring the work of the home and ensures that staff are well supported, advised and trained. He currently works long hours to ensure that recent system changes being brought in by the new registered provider are implemented in young people's best interests. For example, appropriate matching of placements, sufficiency of staffing levels and budgets are being prioritised.

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
34 (2001)	ensure that the system for monitoring matters in the home provides for consultation with parents and placing authorities (Regulation 34 (3))	22/06/2013
28 (2001)	ensure that children's case records include the dates on which any money or valuables are deposited by or on behalf of a child for safekeeping, and the dates on which any money is withdrawn, and any valuables are returned (Regulation 28 (1) Schedule 3.25)	22/06/2013

Recommendations

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

- ensure that the home carries out searches of young people's rooms and possessions in accordance with the home's guidance (NMS 3.20)
- ensure that the children's guide includes for each young person how they can contact their Independent Reviewing Officer (NMS 13.5)
- ensure that a clear and comprehensive summary of any allegations made against a member of staff, including details of how the allegation was followed up and resolved, a record of any action taken and the decisions reached, is kept on the person's confidential file and a copy is provided to the person as soon as the investigation is concluded. (NMS 20.7)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people are making good progress towards emotional resilience and understanding of their background. This is because they are settled and feel valued here. The manager expressed confidence that young people are 'progressing very well and the behaviour of some is faultless'. Young people are forming attachments to staff and trusting the plans and agreements that are in place for both their daily care and their futures. Young people are enjoying quality time with their key workers

and staff, pursuing active hobbies that they enjoy, including swimming, dirt biking and the cinema. Young people feel included in the life of the home and know that their wishes and feelings are sought. This too contributes to their increasing self-confidence and good behaviour.

Young people's educational achievements are good, taking into account their starting points. Older teenagers have sat some GCSE exams and are intending to attend college access and preparation courses over the next few months. Some young people are attending school on a reduced timetable. Other young people are maintaining their education through school work sent and private study because they are aiming to return to a previous school when their former placement resumes. Young people are committed to their learning and are making good progress since being here. This is because they have developed much improved daily routines and sleep routines with the help and support of staff.

Young people who are approaching independence have a realistic understanding of the challenges they will face. They are responding to the guidance and support of staff, particularly in relation to appropriate social interactions. They have a good understanding of key health risks, including smoking and drug and alcohol misuse. They take responsibility for their behaviour when socialising on free time with peers in their home area. They understand the importance of healthy lifestyles and have a grasp of healthy eating and the importance of regular medical, dental, and optical checks. Other young people's physical health has also improved through staff helping to promptly organise various medical and dental checks and treatments. All young people's confidence and self-care is improving and they have reduced their smoking because staff praise and encourage them to take pride in their appearance, clothing, health and hygiene.

All young people benefit from appropriate contact with family, friends and other people who are important to them. They also benefit from good emotional support from staff in connection with any difficult feelings and conflicts arising from these contacts. Young people are all encouraged and helped to collect memorabilia of their time in placement and are enjoying doing this alongside staff. Overall, young people get on well together in the home. They benefit from, and contribute to, the calm, homely atmosphere.

Quality of care

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

Young people enjoy positive and constructive relationships with staff and with each other, and behave very well. Social workers say, 'Staff interventions are working well because staff demonstrate unconditional positive regard to young people.' The manager and staff also say that the good quality of their relationships with young people is underpinned by the insights and strategies shared with them through group discussions with the home's visiting psychologist. The psychologist helps staff use 'playfulness, patience, acceptance, curiosity and empathy' in their relationships with young people. She advises them about individualised and positive behaviour

strategies which can help young people to manage conflict and develop successful social interactions. For example, staff do not only adopt calm, positive styles with young people, but they diffuse and enable young people to resume control in ways they know they feel most comfortable with. This might be by making sure the young person is able to easily leave the room, or by the staff member using clear, straightforward statements rather than employing a jokey manner which is confusing, patronising or sarcastic for that young person. As a result, young people say, 'I get on well with all the staff and most of the kids.'

The views and wishes of young people influence the running of the home and the delivery of care. Young people can and do complain and make representations with confidence. They have asked for funds for a garden trampoline and more games and equipment. They have made agreements to have their rooms decorated to their own colour scheme and have complained about how a behaviour incident has been handled. The home has taken account of, and acted on, the lessons learnt from complaints from young people and managers consistently feed appropriate issues through to the organisation's head office. They ensure that young people understand why it is not possible to act on their wishes in all cases.

Overall, each young person's different daily timetable and interests are catered for well by good shift organisation and staff's commitment. For example, some young people like to go out looking for deer and wildlife, while others have a film they would like to see at the cinema or are out on free time with friends. Staff facilitate these activities well and also ensure that appointments, for example for dental treatment and future education courses, are prioritised and kept. As a result, young people feel valued and they make progress in all areas. The fact that young people are not routinely given the contact name and number of their independent reviewing officer in their guide to the home has not had an adverse impact on their ability to have their voice heard.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people are very safe in the home and outside it and there is no risk taking behaviour taking place. Care and behaviour management plans are of good quality, clearly identifying risks and protective factors for individual young people. These are well known by staff so that risks are addressed as part of daily living and key working with each young person. As a result, staff are confident that young people have learnt how to keep themselves safe and have gained some insight into previous risky behaviours and exploitation. Equally, protective plans are regularly reviewed in the light of young people's behaviour, so that care practice minimises any institutional feel whilst ensuring that the environment is physically safe. For example, when young people are keeping to good routines and there is no presenting risk of self-harm or aggressive behaviour in the home, young people are able to keep their own razors and deodorants in their rooms. Similarly, they can keep their televisions in their rooms overnight without the power being switched off centrally. Young people who are no longer going missing are now allowed to have their mobile

phones under agreed arrangements and can go out on outings and activities with staff to the cinema and shopping complexes.

Young people no longer go missing. The home has clear and proactive relationships with police and report to them any information they receive which helps police in their enquiries about possible abusers. Similarly, young people are protected from abuse in the home because the home takes seriously, and addresses, any allegations against staff in a way that provides effective protection for young people and staff. However, staff who have been subject to investigation have not yet received a summary of the allegations made against them or the decisions reached. The manager acknowledges that this has been overlooked, but young people have not been compromised by this omission because they have been told about the investigation outcome and are accepting of it.

Managers monitor the use and incidence of restraint to ensure that its use is minimised. There has been a change to the accredited physical intervention system used in the home since the last inspection, but all staff are trained in the new method. Physical intervention is rare and reflects the increasing skill of staff in avoiding the need for its use. Nevertheless, staff responses to one behaviour incident since the last inspection resulted in an escalation of young people's aggressive behaviour. Staff demonstrated only adequate practice in relation to a resultant restraint and a room search. The home's guidance about room searches was not followed fully and staff practice was unsuccessful in de-escalating aggressive behaviour quickly. Equally, items taken away in the room search were not safely stored or disposed of in a timely way. However, manager review and staff supervision has resulted in practice lessons being learnt from this incident and the issues have not occurred again since.

Leadership and management

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

The manager is new in post and still awaits registration with Ofsted due to delays with the return of a required check. However, he works tirelessly to tackle previous weaknesses in the home and make improvements. He models good practice with young people and has prioritised improvements to staff support, supervision and monitoring of the home. As a result, there are more robust and effective ways to build confidence and competence amongst the staff team, including better shift planning, more staff meetings and regular input from the psychologist. The manager has also focused on the improvement and review of care planning and key working records, so that staff are clearer about what they need to do with each young person to help them progress.

Staff receive regular supervision which is of good quality and their individual training needs are identified and met. All staff are working together with the manager to ensure that they are familiar with new guidance, policies and procedures which the new registered provider is using, as well as a new computer system. Overall, this is working well and social workers all say that they are kept well up to date with the

work of the home and the progress of their young person. The manager has also successfully overseen improvements in the matching of young people to the home. This has ensured a suitable mix of young people with different risks who have not adversely affected one another's behaviour or progress. As a result, the home is succeeding at present and young people are making good progress.

The manager can demonstrate the difference the home has made to each young person in placement. He monitors the work of the home effectively overall. For example, he revisits behaviour management records to ensure that staff work to best effect and remember to include and address the wishes and feelings of young people about records that are made about them. However, the manager's monitoring activities have not identified that young people's money and valuables have not been recorded in every instance when they have been handed in for safekeeping. Monitoring has also not recognised the importance of keeping both a record in the home and in young people's case files of all their monies. This means that these systems do not fully protect against the possibility of young people's monies going missing.

Young people's views about the home inform the home's development plan and manager representations to the organisation. However, the manager and the registered provider visitor undertake little regular consultation with social workers and parents about the quality of care in the home. This is a missed opportunity to hear and take account of the views of stakeholders about the home's 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* and the evaluation schedule for the inspection of children's homes.