

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Diane Thackrah
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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 home is registered to provide care for up to four young people who have emotional and behavioural difficulties. The home is managed by East Sussex County Council.

Overall effectiveness

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

Young people are able to make progress in all areas of their lives and benefit from the good quality support provided by staff. There is good, individualised care for young people that takes into account individual needs. Care is well planned and promotes positive outcomes for young people. Young people are happy and feel safe and well cared for. They understand that staff have their best interests at heart. Positive relationships are maintained with young people. This is achieved through a professional and enthusiastic approach to young people's care which helps young people to make good progress in all aspects of their development. Young people's safety is valued and protected.

There is an understanding of the home's strengths and weaknesses by the home's manager who has a focus on improvement. There is an emphasis on creating a homely and nurturing environment for young people, however, this could be further improved by ensuring that maintenance work is carried out to improve the appearance of the external parts of the building and grounds. Recording is generally good but improvements are needed in order to improve the recording of sanctions and the use of restraint. Young people are generally kept safe and have their health needs promoted, however, health needs and known risks are not always documented and checks on the fire alarm do not always happen on time. Improvements in these areas are needed in order to strengthen the existing good quality care.

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
12A (2001)	ensure that a placement plan is in place setting out how the child's welfare will be safeguarding and promoted (in relations to risks associated with going missing) and the arrangements made for the child's health care (Regulation 12(1B)(a&b)	25/09/2011

17B (2001)	ensure that a written record is made, in relation to any measure of control, restraint or discipline, in a volume kept for the purpose which shall include all information as detailed in this regulation (Regulation 17(B)(3)(b)(d)(e))	25/09/2011
31 (2001)	ensure that all parts of the children's home are of sound construction, kept in good structural repair externally and internally and kept reasonably decorated and maintained (Including the paintwork and curtains in young people's bedrooms, the broken letter box, the poor external paintwork, graffiti on the front of the house and the weeds in the grounds). (Regulation 31(2)(d)&(e))	25/09/2011

Recommendations

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

- ensure that weekly safety checks are made in relation to the fire detection system. (NMS 10)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people benefit from individualised support that helps them to develop a positive self view. They are well supported to develop an understanding of their backgrounds and this helps them to become more confident and grounded. Positive contact is supported and arranged by staff who understand the importance of this for young people. This helps young people to benefit from positive links with those who are important to them and to feel valued. The close support offered by staff helps young people to focus on their goals and develop their strengths. It also helps to ensure that young people feel safe and that they have an adult that they can talk to and trust.

Young people are generally well supported to lead healthy lifestyles and have their health needs met. For example, there are lots of opportunities for exercise, outdoor activities and a to have a restful sleep at night. Healthy eating is consistently encouraged and young people have lots of opportunities for learning about healthy food. One young person said 'I like cooking with staff'. Staff make sure that young people have access to health care professionals such as the dentist and optician and this helps promote young people's healthy development. Emotional well-being is also promoted and young people have access to and benefit from services such as the child and adolescent mental health services. All of these steps promote young people's good health. The promotion of positive outcomes for young people's healthy development could further be improved by ensuring that the health needs of young people are well documented on placement plans.

Young people make good progress in their education and have excellent attendance records. Staff value education by supporting young people to attend schools that meet their needs and by maintaining close contact with education providers. This helps to promote some consistency for young people which supports their learning. In the home young people are provided with support by staff to do their homework and to focus on the importance of education.

Good efforts are made by staff to help young people make a positive contribution to the home and to the community by encouraging them to attend local groups such as the sea cadets. This is not always taken up by young people but they are aware that they have these options. Young people have access to a broad range of leisure activities and staff are enthusiastic in promoting these. They say that they enjoy activities like going out for dinner, fishing and to the zoo with staff. Staff are enthusiastic about introducing young people to new activities. Such efforts help to nurture young people's talents and interests. Young people are well supported to gain skills that will help them have a successful transition to adult life. Current young people are too young to have a pathway plan, but skills for independence, such as saving money, household chores and cooking are incorporated into everyday life in the home.

Quality of care

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

Young people enjoy positive and constructive relationships with staff and say that they have an adult that they can talk to at all times. Young people feel listened to and know that their views actively influence the running of the home. There are house meetings and young people are consulted with informally on a day-to-day basis. For example, young people are able to choose the activities they partake in, the food they eat and contribute their ideas about how the home is decorated. A staff member said 'we try to find out what décor and bed linen the young people prefer so that they can feel involved in planning their stay here'. When young people's requests are not met with, staff help young people to understand why. There is a culture of promoting young people's rights and helping them understand their responsibilities. Young people understand that staff are concerned about their welfare and this helps them feel valued. They feel fairly treated and understand that sanctions are put in place to promote their welfare and help them learn positive behaviour.

Young people understand how to make a complaint and say that they feel confident that any complaints will be taken seriously. There is information about how to make a complaint in various places in the home and this make it easy for young people to make a complaint and sends a message to young people that they will be listened to. Young people have clear goals detailed in a placement plan that staff help them achieve. Young people are regularly consulted with regarding their placement plans. This helps young people to feel valued and involved in their care.

Young people benefit from living in a healthy environment and have access to the services and support they need. This includes support from the child and adolescent mental health services and their own social workers. Young people live in a residential area close to public transport and leisure facilities. A lot has been done within the home to create a homely and domestic environment for young people to enjoy. However, the outside of the building looks worn, for example, there is poor paintwork, a broken letter box, some graffiti and untidy gardens. Staff report that this is as a result of a slow response to maintenance work requests in some cases from the local authority. Such practice does not fully promote young people's well-being. Young people have their own bedroom, which they are able to personalise. Bedrooms reflect young people's interests and contain meaningful photographs and posters. Young people are also able to keep their own pets if they can demonstrate responsibility in caring for these. There is a computer room and the computer has internet safeguards, a television lounge, dining room and large conservatory. This helps to ensure that young people can be alone in the home if they choose to be. There is a commitment from staff to providing a pleasant living environment for young people to enjoy.

Staff are proactive in supporting young people to make educational achievements. They engage with schools which helps to promote young people's attendance. When young people consistently fail to attend school, staff are proactive in taking the action to positively address this. This helps to ensure that young people have a positive experience of education. A wide range of constructive and enjoyable activities are made available to young people and this helps them to benefit from new, constructive and pleasant experiences. For example, one young person enjoys going fishing with staff members. Another young person enjoys going to the cinema, shopping and for meals with staff.

Staff take the needs relating to young people's cultural identity and cultural background seriously. They do this by identifying specific individual needs such as religious belief and positively addressing these in daily living and care planning. The sensitive and proactive approach to helping young people maintain contact with their family members helps young people to understand their cultural backgrounds.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people feel safe in this home and there are adequate measures in place to keep them safe. They feel confident that there are adults who they can confide in and who will look after them well. Staff nurture positive relationships with young people by treating them with respect. There is good practice in response to the high levels of challenging behaviour. Staff show warmth to the young people whilst maintaining professional boundaries. This helps young people to feel valued and to develop positive behaviour. There are strong behaviour management systems in place. For example, young people have reward charts that help them to monitor their progress. Young people can earn treats such as sweets or vouchers for clothing

which gives them a good incentive to help improve their behaviour. There is limited use of restraint in this home, and when it is used, is done so as a last resort. This helps young people to feel safe. The arrangements for recording the use of restraint and sanctions are not robust and this does not allow for good monitoring of practice. Improvements are required in this area in order to improve the safe care offered to young people.

Good arrangements are in place for monitoring and challenging any incidents of bullying. Young people report that they feel safe from bullying and that the staff do not tolerate bullying. Staff make available a wide range of constructive and interesting activities as a way to reduce any bullying behaviour in the home. There have been a number of incidents of young people going missing from the home recently. Good efforts have been made by staff to help keep young people safe when they go missing. For example, young people are reported missing to the relevant people in good time and they are responded to positively on their return. Also, a positive, professional relationship has been developed with the local police in order to help reduce incidents of young people going missing. However, there is a need to make improvements to the risk assessment process in relation to young people who go missing. Clear strategies for helping to reduce absconding behaviour are not in place and this does not fully promote young people's well-being.

Young people have their privacy respected and their dignity upheld. There is a portable telephone for young people to make personal calls. One young person said that staff always knock and wait for a response before entering bedrooms. There is careful selection of staff working with young people. These thorough selection and vetting processes helps to keep young people safe and prevent unsuitable people from working with them. A number of checks are made on all new staff including Criminal Records Bureau checks and written references prior to working in the home. There are strong arrangements for responding to allegations or suspicions of harm. Staff are clear about their responsibilities for reporting allegations without delay and for a professional, multi-disciplinary response. Young people benefit from living in a safe and secure environment and this protects them from harm. There are numerous health and safety checks made in the building including checks on the portable electrical appliances and on the fire safety equipment. Safety could be further improved by more regular checks of the fire detection system.

Leadership and management

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

This is generally a well managed home. There is a new manager who has a wealth of experience in working with young people. The manager has made assurances of her intension to make an application for the post of Registered Manager within two weeks of this inspection in order to promote stability within the team. There is a development plan in place aimed at making improvements to the running of the home. For example, further staff training is planned and there are plans in place to improve the review of in-house records. Positive action has been taken in relation to the one requirement made at the last inspection of the home. This has resulted in all

staff members now being trained in first aid and this helps to ensure young people's safety and welfare. The aims of the Statement of Purpose continue to be met. Young people and relevant stake holders have easy access to this document and to a young people's guide and this ensures that they are clear about what the home sets out to do. The manager is clear that some improvements are needed to ensure that the home runs in the best interests of young people as there is a robust quality assurance process. Weaknesses and strengths are highlighted as a result of regular Regulation 33 inspections. For example, there have been some delays in team meetings and supervisions taking place recently. Positive steps have been taken to address this issue and this has helped to improve staff development and team working. There is an emphasis on team work to help promote consistency for young people and staff acknowledge that this could be further developed through more regular team meetings.

The home is well resourced and has sufficient staffing levels in order to meet the needs of current young people. A good quality staff training, development and induction process is in place which helps to ensure that young people are cared for by experienced, knowledgeable and confident staff who are able to meet their needs. Staff say that their training needs are well met. They also confirm that time is given to allow them to carryout a handover session on each shift and this promotes good consistency in care for young people. There are generally good arrangements for record keeping. For example, daily records and statutory documentation is on file for young people and this is stored securely. This ensures that young people have a permanent, secure record of their progress. The arrangements for recording significant incidents are good and help to promote the protection of young people in the home.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.