

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	24/02/2012
Inspector	Elaine Cray
Type of inspection	Interim
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	18/10/2011
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This home is part of a large private children's care organisation and is registered to accommodate three young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties. The home offers short, long-term and emergency placements. The home has a school on site, and this is registered with the Department for Education.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Good progress	The children's home has demonstrated continued improvement in quality of care and outcomes for children and young people and where appropriate has addressed all requirements and the large majority of recommendations that were raised at the previous inspection.
Satisfactory progress	The children's home has maintained quality of care and outcomes for children and young people and where appropriate has addressed all requirements and the majority of recommendations that were raised at the previous inspection.
Inadequate progress	The children's home has failed to address one or more requirements and/or has not met the majority of recommendations and/or the quality of care and outcomes for children and young people have declined since the last full inspection.

Progress

Since their previous inspection the service is judged to be making **satisfactory** progress.

A full inspection was carried out in October 2011 and the home was given an overall effectiveness judgement of outstanding. No statutory requirements or recommendations were made as a result of the last inspection. This inspection judged progress made since the last inspection.

The home has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection. Young people continue to enjoy positive outcomes. Developments and improvements have been made to ensure young people are well cared for and kept safe. The statutory requirements and recommendations from this inspection arise specifically from the most recent changes in the home.

The changes since the last inspection relate to a recent change in occupancy coinciding with several changes in staff and an exchange of managers. The new manager and staff team present a commitment to maintaining good standards in the quality of service to young people while managing the recent changes.

Young people report a good level of satisfaction with the care provided at the home. They benefit from clear strategies and daily routines to support their behaviour. Young people quickly engage with the care and education framework. They clearly enjoy and value meaningful and respectful relationships with the staff. The importance of such relationships is demonstrated as some young people express some insecurity about the staffing changes in the home. They value the remaining staff very much but miss not having as many female staff to talk to. This change is significant as staffing ratios do not always provide a gender balance on each shift or reflect the gender needs of the young people currently living at the home.

Young people feel settled because they are provided with good information about the home, including how to raise concerns. They are involved in the running of the home and their placements through regular house meetings and key worker sessions. Mealtimes are useful and interactive times as all the staff and young people sit down for their meal and chat about how the day is going and plan the rest of the day. Recent changes have impacted on some young people's clarity about the routines in the home. While records show clear consultation and planning of activities, some young people are unclear about these arrangements in terms of funding and availability.

A key strength of this service is how young people are admitted to the home in a sensitive way. Young people settle quickly despite sometimes arriving at the home in an emergency and at very short notice. Staff and the young people already living at the home are integral to making young people feel safe and reassured. Placing social workers make very positive comments about the welcoming, homely and nurturing environment provided to young people.

A strength also valued by social workers is how adeptly the staff put clear safeguarding strategies into place, including staffing ratios, supervision levels, risk assessment and missing from care protocols. Young people are safe because staff work in close partnership with social workers, safeguarding agencies and families.

While the emergency admission procedures sensitively respond to the young people, there is a weakness in obtaining required information and drawing up placement plans. Staff presented a good understanding of the young people's needs and circumstances, but this knowledge has not been ratified with placement documentation from placing authorities. Consent documentation is inconsistently recorded and obtained for some young people.

Young people value the support they receive to attend education at the service. Other young people attend and achieve well in mainstream education. Some young people discussed opportunities for further education and their career paths. Building the self-confidence of young people and equipping them with the motivation to want to do well and reach their potential is a key element of this service.

Young people understand their plans for the future. They learn life and domestic skills in the day-to-day running of the home. Young people welcome opportunities to

start independence preparation programmes to look at budgeting and try out many of the things they will experience when they leave the home. Young people talked about: being able to take more responsibility; making positive life style choices; maintaining good social networks and making positive decisions for their futures.

Young people are supported by staff who have relevant training and supervision. The manager and staff are committed to making improvements in the home and staff have been asked to put forward ideas for the home's development plan.

Young people's care and outcomes are monitored. The most recent report from the independent person identified several shortfalls in administration of the home at a time of transition and change. These matters are being addressed by the new manager and the day-to-day care and experiences of young people continue to be monitored.

Two statutory requirements and two recommendations are set as a result of this visit.

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
11 (2001)	make suitable arrangements to ensure that the home is conducted with due regard to the sex of children accommodated there (Regulation 11.2 (b))	30/03/2012
28 (2001)	ensure children's records include the information as specified in Schedule 3. (Regulation 28 (1) Schedule 3.18)	30/03/2012

Recommendations

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

- clarify children's views, wishes and feelings about the day-to-day running of the home. This is with particular regard to how children perceive the recent changes in staffing and the availability of activities in the home (NMS 1.1)
- make every effort to achieve continuity of staffing so that children's attachments are not overly disrupted. (NMS 17.8)

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 progress made by the provider since the last full inspection, identifies any further strengths, any areas for improvement and makes judgements as outlined in the *Inspection of children's homes – framework for inspection (March 2011)*.