

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Sharon Lloyd
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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 two young people of either sex, aged between 10 and 17 years. The home is owned and managed by a private company.

Overall effectiveness

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

This home provides a warm, nurturing and settled environment where children thrive. The experienced staff team deliver good quality care through consistent and positive relationships with children. Staff are well supervised and supported by the manager. Monitoring of the quality of care and operation of the home are satisfactory. Children feel safe and well cared for.

Areas for development include minor shortfalls in records that do not impact upon the quality of care. However, there is a shortfall in risk assessments relating to security at night when there is only one staff member on duty. This is a potential risk to children's safety. The kitchen is locked at night but there is no risk assessment in place to justify the reason for this. There is no development plan for the home and the record of visitors is not held in a permanent form.

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
29 (2001)	maintain a visitor's record in accordance with Schedule 4 and ensure it is kept up to date and retained for at least 15 years from the date of the last entry (Regulation 29)	31/07/2011
23 (2001)	ensure that all parts of the home to which children have access are so far as reasonably practicable free from hazards to their health and safety and free from avoidable risks. In particular, ensure that children's safety during the night is not compromised and risk assess the need to lock the kitchen at night. (Regulation 23)	31/07/2011

Recommendations

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

- update the Statement of Purpose so it accurately reflects the services and facilities the home provides (NMS 13)
- ensure that there is a written policy and procedure that provides staff with guidance about the use of electronic monitoring (NMS 21.3)
- ensure that a risk assessment is carried out and recorded in writing, identifying any likely risks to staff, children and members of the public, where only one member of staff is on duty at night (NMS 17.9)
- produce a development plan for the home and review it annually. (NMS 15.2)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Children make good progress in their development. They grow in confidence and develop a positive self-image and a new outlook on life that increases their resilience. Children's interpersonal skills improve as they learn to treat others with respect so they are better able to make and sustain friendships with peers.

Children display photographs of their families on bedroom walls. They know about their culture and personal history and develop a strong sense of identity and self esteem through key worker sessions. Contact with families takes place both at the home or at supervised venues outside the home, where required. Staff support children having contact and supervise telephone calls where this is stipulated in a child's placement plan. Children said they are satisfied with the arrangements for contact with their families.

Children receive the support they need to lead healthy lives. For example, children know that smoking is bad for their health and some are successfully following a smoking reduction programme. They receive any medical, dental, optical or other treatment they need. They eat a well balanced diet containing foods from other cultures and they often grow rapidly in the first weeks following their admission to the home. They enjoy a 'take-away night' once a week where they try a diverse range of foods.

Children attend school in line with their education plans and make good progress, often from a low starting point. During normal school hours, children who are not in school spend time constructively with staff. This includes trips to museums and places of interest, exercising and playing board games. Children attend the local library and enjoy reading to and with staff. Children enjoy participating in a range of leisure pursuits that develop their confidence, promote their good health and provide relaxation. These include horse riding, swimming, baking and watching DVDs with staff.

Children develop self-care skills and participate in household chores that help to prepare them for future independent living. This includes taking responsibility for keeping their bedrooms clean and tidy, preparing meals and helping out with shopping and in the kitchen. The home achieves this at the same time as providing a warm, nurturing and friendly environment where children feel cared for.

Quality of care

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

Children say they are well looked after by staff who care about them. They particularly appreciate being woken up with a cup of tea in the mornings to help them wake up gently. They respond well to the nurturing environment staff provide and develop positive relationships with the staff team, who treat them with respect and provide good role models. Staff use effective behaviour management strategies to successfully promote acceptable behaviour and reduce challenging and antisocial behaviour. A staff member said, 'I think we do really well with nurturing the children. We let them be children'.

Staff follow good routines that promote children's health and well-being. They know how to administer medicines safely and provide opportunities for children to have plenty of exercise, engaging in activities they enjoy. Staff provide children with a well balanced diet and encourage healthy eating. They take children for health appointments and liaise with the local nurse for children in care so that health problems are identified and addressed.

Staff successfully support children to attend school and make the most of their education. Where children do not have a school placement, staff work with local authorities to find a suitable education placement and encourage them to attend. They support children back into school and reward children's efforts to reintegrate into school. They recognise their achievements and encourage children to try again when faced with setbacks.

Children's placement plans identify their diverse and individual needs and how these are to be addressed in the home. Plans are consistent with the placing authorities' care plans. Children are involved in developing their placement plans and confirm they know why they are living at the home and what the plans are for their futures. Children are successfully encouraged to take an active part in their statutory reviews and other planning meetings. They report that staff listen to them and take their views into account in day-to-day arrangements as well as in relation to their individual needs and wishes. For example, one child was able to negotiate a new bedtime and children can choose the activities they engage in.

Social workers confirm they are satisfied with the quality of care provided and say they are impressed with the nurturing and welcoming environment that enables children to settle in quickly and adapt to new routines and a structured lifestyle. They recognise that children benefit from the opportunities to enjoy new experiences and develop new interests in a safe and supportive environment. One said, 'They are really child focused and seem very fair'.

Children appreciate the style and location of the house and the way it is presented as a domestic family home, in keeping with neighbouring houses. The kitchen is locked at night so that children cannot access it after supper. No risk assessment is in place to identify why this institutionalised practice continues to be necessary.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Children said they feel safe in the home and get on well with the staff team. They know what is expected of them and they know how to make a complaint. Boundaries are clear and children respond well to the consistent behaviour management techniques. There has been only one incident of a child being missing from home since the last inspection. This was for a few hours, soon after the child's placement at the home and the child returned willingly. It has not happened since.

Staff report that restraint is rarely used in the home because they have developed effective behaviour management strategies. They promote the development of self-control through positive relationships and children confirm there have been no restraints since the last inspection. They said that sanctions are used fairly and the records confirmed this.

Staff know how to respond to allegations or disclosures of abuse, although there have been none. Visitors are required to sign in and are appropriately supervised in the presence of children. The home has sound vetting procedures so that staff appointed are deemed to be suitable and children are protected as far as possible from unsafe persons.

Risk assessments relating to the safety of the premises and the children's known and likely activities serve to identify and reduce hazards to children's health and safety. Routine checks on the safety of the premises and services promote the safety of the accommodation for children. However, there are a number of shortfalls in the safety arrangements. For example, only one member of staff sleeps in at night and there are no waking night staff. As there is no house alarm, there is a risk that children could leave the premises at night whilst the staff member is sleeping and this would leave the front door open to intruders. This hazard is not covered by a risk assessment so no arrangements are in place to reduce the risk. One child has an electronic monitoring device on the bedroom door so that staff know when the child comes out of the bedroom during the night. The need for this has been risk assessed and agreed in writing by the placing authority; however, the home does not have a policy about the use of electronic monitoring.

Leadership and management

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

The manager is suitably qualified, experienced and supervised. She effectively monitors the operation of the home and monthly visits are carried out on behalf of the provider to assure the quality of care to the children. The views of children, parents and social workers are obtained by the provider and influence the development of the service the company provides. However, there is no individual development plan for this home and children do not contribute to the annual appraisals of staff. The Statement of Purpose is regularly reviewed and updated; however, it does not contain fully accurate and clear information about some aspects of the care provided.

Actions and recommendations raised following the last inspection have been addressed, with the exception of one. A recommendation was made to ensure 80% of staff are suitably qualified. The responsible individual for the home recognises the importance of having qualified and experienced staff and is working towards having a fully qualified staff team. Currently 66% of the team are qualified in caring for children and young people and all are experienced in working with children and young people in residential care. Those not qualified are working towards a suitable qualification.

The experienced staff team of seven work well together to provide children with consistent care. Staff said: 'We all sing from the same hymn sheet and boundaries are clear'. Children get to know the staff quickly and build constructive and positive relationships with them. Staff are well supervised and supported to provide good quality care to children. A member of staff said, 'Leadership is good. The manager is always here or contactable'.

Children's files are satisfactorily maintained and staff pursue missing information with social workers and the specialist nurse for children in care. Staff liaise well with other professionals involved to ensure that children get a good service. A social worker said, 'Communication is very good'. A number of pages in the visitor's record book have come loose and this jeopardises the permanency and accuracy of the record.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.