

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Steve Pearson
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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 children's home provides care and accommodation for up to six young people. The home is provided by a charity and is registered to care for young people with emotional or behavioural difficulties.

Overall effectiveness

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

The Registered Manager and staff are experienced and knowledgeable and they are providing high quality care. They provide consistency and continuity of care and relationships between themselves and young people are very positive.

Most young people do well in education and levels of attendance and achievement are generally high. The health of young people also improves after admission to the home.

Staffing levels are high and this helps young people to receive one-to-one care which is necessary and which they enjoy. Each young person has a named key worker and this arrangement also helps to ensure that young people's individual needs are met.

As a result of this inspection, two requirements and five recommendations have been made. However, there are no significant impacts arising from the shortfalls which relate to quality monitoring, recording of complaints, first aid training and recording young people's emotional needs in care plans.

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
4 (2001)	ensure that the Statement of Purpose describes the arrangements for promoting positive behaviour (Regulation 4(1))	13/02/2012
34 (2001)	ensure that the system for monitoring the matters set out in Schedule 6 provides for consultation with parents of children accommodated in the home. (Regulation 34 (3))	30/12/2011

Recommendations

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

- fully record the outcome of every complaint, specifically by making clear whether the complaint is upheld or not (NMS 1.6)
- ensure that the emotional needs of each young person are recorded in their residential placement plan (NMS 3.7)
- provide sufficient training in first aid. In particular this means that at least one person in the staff team should have the three-day qualification (NMS 6.7)
- ensure that the annual development plan either identifies any planned changes in the operation or resources of the service, or confirms the continuation of the home's current operation and resource (NMS 15.2)
- ensure that in relation to Regulation 34, a copy of the monitoring report is sent to Ofsted within 28 days of its completion once every six months. (Volume 5, statutory guidance, para 3.14)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people develop clear and individual identities because the staff enable them to follow their own choices in, for example, hobbies, interests, clothing and toiletries. In surveys, all young people agreed that their culture and religious beliefs were respected.

Young people's health improves over time after they are admitted to the children's home. They have regular check-ups and appointments with health professionals. They also receive specialist support from a variety of professionals such as a nurse for looked after children, a sexual health worker and emotional health workers. One young person said 'we get to see the doctor, dentist and optician regularly and we do lots of exercise'. All the staff have foundation level training in first aid. However, nobody in the team has the higher level qualification and so overall training levels in first aid are not sufficiently robust.

Young people's overall attendance and achievement in education is good and the majority of them are doing very well. Where necessary, the staff ensure specialist educational provision is arranged. They also go in to support young people in class when necessary. Specialist provision through personal tuition within the children's home has also been arranged when necessary.

Young people are fully supported to see their family and friends. For example, one young person said 'I get to see my family and friends often'. The staff also support young people who have left the home to keep in touch with their parents.

The staff enable young people to learn important knowledge and skills which will be useful when they are older and living independently. One young person summed this up by saying 'the staff teach us to shop, prepare and cook meals'. One member of staff is currently putting together a four-stage leaving care package for older children. The staff also support school age young people to gain part time employment.

Quality of care

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

The Registered Manager and staff enable young people to have a significant say in the running of the home and in the content of their own care plans. For example, one young person said 'we have regular house meetings and these work...we asked for a basketball hoop and we got one'. Young people also eat food that they like and help to choose. They are aware of how to make a formal complaint and have made three complaints since the previous inspection. Complaints are thoroughly investigated but the outcomes are unclear as there is no indication whether they have been upheld or not.

The Registered Manager and staff are effective at promoting positive behaviour. The use of sanctions is fair. The staff have seen a reduction in sanctions with the introduction of achievement plans which focus on rewarding positive behaviour. Relationships between young people and between them and the staff are positive. For example, one young person said 'it's a nice house because we get on well with each other and we get on well with the staff. The staff don't let us down...if they promise to do something they keep their promise'. Rewards are used creatively to good effect.

The staff sometimes have to restrain young people for appropriate reasons of safety. Such occasions are recorded effectively and the staff receive annual training in how to respond to challenging behaviour. Each young person's behavioural needs are recorded in their residential placement plan. However, their emotional needs are not always described which means this important area of need may not be met effectively.

Young people have access to a wide choice of leisure activities, several of which promote health and well-being. For example, one young person said 'we get lots of activities...we can have two paid ones and three unpaid ones a week'. Young people also go on holidays and breaks with the staff.

The Registered Manager and staff support the young people to attend and achieve in school. The home has a computer for use by the young people although it does not currently have internet access due to safety reasons. There is also a good range of books and games.

The premises are maintained in a safe condition. Professional technicians regularly

service the electrical equipment, gas appliances and equipment for preventing, detecting and extinguishing fires.

Effective arrangements are in place regarding new admissions to the home. Young people are only admitted if it is felt their needs can be met and if their admission is likely to have no undue impact on the current group of residents.

Residential placement plans are in place for each young person. These are up to date and make clear the needs of young people and how these are to be met. The staff enable young people to be clear about the content of these plans and to make clear their wishes for their own care. Young people added 'we talk to our key worker or social worker before our review meetings so we can have a say in what we want to happen'. Young people also have 'client profiles' which make clear their likes and dislikes, strengths and areas for improvement. These help the staff to have a clear understanding of each young person's needs and their role in helping to meet them.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

The Registered Manager and staff care for young people safely. One young people summed this up by saying 'I feel safe and the staff keep us safe'. The staff assess any hazards that may affect young people and the risk assessments contain clear strategies about how to reduce risks further if possible. Measures taken are proportionate and still enable young people to learn how to deal with challenges appropriately.

Sanctions and restraints are used proportionately and only if necessary. Such occasions are fully recorded and young people can add their written comments as well.

The staff receive regular training in how to safeguard the welfare of young people. They understand their duty to pass on concerns to the registered persons. Concerns arising within the home are broadly handled effectively although full use is not being made of the relationship with the Local Authority Designated Officer.

Most young people do not go missing from the home. When this does happen, the staff follow appropriate procedures which take into account national and local guidance.

Appropriate arrangements are in place to ensure that staff recruited to work with young people are suitable and safe. Young people also help to choose new staff and this helps them to feel valued and involved.

Leadership and management

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

At the previous inspection Ofsted made two requirements and four recommendations which the registered persons have now met. As a result, several improvements have been made. It is now clear why visitors have called at the home because the reason for their visit is recorded. Ofsted is now better informed because the home notifies it of the outcomes of child protection enquiries. The staff are enabled to be clearer about how to reduce risks to young people because risk assessments are more specific. Young people are better protected because the staff assess the risk of bullying and being bullied. There is also greater accountability about when the staff restrain any young person because all the details required by legislation are now recorded and young people add their views and signature.

The home is managed well. A clear management structure is in place comprising the manager, a deputy manager and three senior staff. Out of hours support and advice is also always available through the on-call manager rota. The staff keep Ofsted and other agencies informed of all significant events in a timely manner.

The home has a clearly written Statement of Purpose which is up to date and describes how the home operates. However, this is not fully descriptive as it lacks information about how the home will promote positive behaviour.

The Registered Manager and deputy are experienced and fully qualified. The staff and young people spoke very positively of the management arrangements. All staff receive regular supervision and their performance is appraised annually. A development plan is then written up to identify training for the next 12 months. However, the plan is not specific about important issues such as the resourcing and operation of the home itself and is therefore not adequately robust.

Staffing levels are very good, for example, one young person said 'there are usually five staff on duty so we get lots of one-to-one time with the staff'. Young people receive continuity of care through low levels of staff turnover and absence. Staffing rotas provide clarity and accountability about who has worked at the home and when. Young people also benefit from mixed gender staffing because five of the fifteen staff are male.

All the established staff are qualified in caring for young people. New staff receive induction training to the standard set by the Children's Workforce Development Council. The registered provider has an established and varied training scheme in place which enables the staff to gain appropriate knowledge and skills.

The registered persons monitor the quality of care on a regular basis. For example, once a month an external person visits the home to assess important issues such as behaviour management, complaints and how often young people are going missing and why. The visitor also speaks to young people, parents and the staff in order to evaluate how the home is performing. The Registered Manager also assesses the relevant issues on a regular basis. However, the breadth of evidence is less robust because the reports do not clarify what parents think about the quality of care. Additionally, Ofsted is unable to keep fully abreast of the home's performance in these areas because it has not received a report in the recommended timescale.

Young people's records are stored securely. Young people themselves are enabled to read and add comments to their records. For example, one young person said 'we can read our daily notes and add comments if we want, but most of us don't bother'.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.