

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Rachel Ruth Britten
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Date of last inspection	07/12/2012
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This children's home is operated by a private company and can accommodate and provide care for one young person who may have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties and/or learning disabilities. The company has its own school for children not attending mainstream education.

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**.

The home continues to exceed requirements in most respects, but is not outstanding as was judged at the last full inspection in December 2012. Young people continue to make extremely good progress in relation to their starting points, across all aspects of their welfare and development. Young people have achieved exceptionally well in progressing towards independent adult life and sustaining emotional well-being and positive relationships. The impact that the home has had in supporting this progress and achieving these outcomes is well evidenced by the comments of staff, parents and professionals.

Young people have very positive views about the care they receive from the current staff team, but do not say the same about all staff who have worked with them in the home since the last inspection. Nevertheless, effective and high quality one to one support is consistently provided. Care and support is highly personalised to meet the individual needs of the young person in placement.

Staff in the home demonstrate a good understanding of safe care practice. This includes rigorous communication and recording to ensure consistency within a lone working environment. Staff manage risks carefully and maintain very safe, yet nurturing boundaries for behaviour. As a result, unsafe situations and behaviour are rare and young people confirm that these are well managed by staff.

Leadership and management arrangements in the home are strong, despite the manager working across two homes. The manager is competent in using the

recording and monitoring systems of the organisation, but has overlooked the importance of logging all complaints to aid full and effective monitoring of all concerns and issues expressed about the home. She has not prioritised engaging young people directly in their records and has not addressed how young people are provided with positive male role models in an all female staff group.

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 means whereby the home will promote appropriate role models of both sexes because the workers at the home are all of one sex (Regulation 4 (1) schedule 1.5)	21/12/2013
24 (2001)	ensure that a written record is made of any complaint, the action taken in response and the outcome of the investigation. This is particularly to ensure that monitoring the home for trends and patterns takes full account of every issue. (Regulation 24(5))	21/12/2013

Recommendations

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

- ensure that children are actively encouraged to read their files, other than confidential or third party information, and to correct errors and add personal statements. (NMS 22.5)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **outstanding**.

Young people who have moved on to adulthood since the last full inspection have achieved success. They obtained secure employment and learnt budgeting skills before leaving the home earlier in 2013. They collected together the things they would need for their accommodation and also passed their driving test whilst in the home. They enjoyed a gradual transfer into their local accommodation and benefitted from regular phone calls and visits from staff to support them. Not only have their material outcomes been good, such that they are driving their own car

now, but their emotional resilience and self-confidence is excellent. They are maintaining positive relationships with adults and peers over a period of years and are flourishing in the local community, with no unhealthy or risky behaviour.

Young people presently in placement also now enjoy and benefit from very regular contact with family and friends who are important to them. The quality of this contact is greatly improved because staff are proactive, fully involved, and facilitate activity based, enjoyable meetings. The staff also welcome social meetings to happen in the home or suitable community venues. As a result, young people are engaging extremely well and are making excellent progress to develop a positive self-view, emotional resilience and understanding of their background.

The educational attendance and achievement of young people is exceptional, taking into account both their actual attainment and their progress from their starting point at the beginning of their placements. For example, some young people have gone on to undertake NVQ3 in care of older people and are undertaking domiciliary care work in the community, having gained a number of GCSE passes whilst at the home. Young people now in placement are maintaining full attendance at their mainstream school, despite the distance. There is also a reduction in incidents with peers in school and a social worker commented that young people are, 'committed to making it work both at the placement and at school.'

Quality of care

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

The views and wishes of young people significantly influence the running of the home and the delivery of care. Young people plan their activities, menus, behaviour targets and household chores alongside staff and receive consistent support from staff to make daily progress. They are able to review their behaviour incentive reward charts and are encouraged to take part in surveys and events for young people who are 'looked after'. Young people are also well supported by staff to express their wishes and feelings in review meetings. However, they do not receive regular encouragement to look at the records staff make about them and do not routinely make comments and changes to their records. This is a missed opportunity for staff to engage young people even further in understanding their situation. Nevertheless, the staff use their skills, resilience and carefully planned strategies to consistently help young people manage conflict and overcome their emotional and psychological issues. As a result, young people now have confidence in all staff and are responding well to their support.

Young people are doing well in school because staff ensure that they get to bed and are well organised for a very early start on weekday mornings. The staff ensure that healthy eating and plenty of exercise are promoted too, so that young people are physically well. For example, young people go horse-riding at weekends and trampolining one night after school. Meal sizes, snacks and treats are planned and provided in moderation. Staff also liaise daily with pastoral care staff at school and facilitate transport to the venues for any school trips. As a result of this high quality

care, potential barriers to inclusion are overcome and young people have the best opportunities for health and progress in their learning. The therapist reported that a young person 'is still in school because of the consistency of care in helping her with social skills.'

The staff ensure that their contribution to the placement plan is focussed on improving the outcomes for each individual child. The social worker reports that staff's work with parents is 'very thorough and supportive.' For example, the staff provide comprehensive weekly feedback to parents prior to a young person's weekly phone call to them. This ensures accurate information about what has actually occurred during the week and supports the young person to reflect and discuss this openly and honestly with parents in a way that helps progress. As a result, young people engage much better in family contact and they feel safely and consistently parented by all the adults responsible for them. Parents say, 'we have seen improvement - they do a really great job.'

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people report that they feel safe and settled in the home and outside it. They trust their key worker and all other staff. They also engage with other professionals and/or advocacy services if they feel unsafe or wish to complain.

The environment is appropriately safe because systems for maintenance, cleaning and security of the home and vehicles are very robust. Visitors are also checked and effectively monitored. Equally, all staff are carefully selected and vetted and there is regular manager monitoring and discussion with staff. Any allegations and bullying are therefore proactively dealt with in a way that provides good protection both for young people and staff who are working alone with them. For example, if staff and young people are unable to establish a positive relationship, staff are redeployed. The staff and manager team focus on establishing and maintaining effective positive relationships with young people within the largely one to one staff ratio of the home. As a result, the service is good at keeping young people safe as well as promoting excellent outcomes.

Care plans and risk assessments clearly identify levels of individual young people's risks and appropriate current protective factors for them. These plans and assessments are consistently applied and regularly reviewed, so that young people can work towards increasing freedoms when they are able to cope with the responsibilities that these bring. For example, young people relatively new in placement do not currently have free time, money in hand, mobile phones, access to toiletries or unsupervised internet access. They understand that these restrictions relate to their individual care and safety needs at present, but that in time they can work towards having these things and using them safely. In the meantime, young people are behaving very well and benefitting from positive and proactive behaviour management strategies which enable them to achieve rewards and make real progress with their social behaviour. For example, young people have earned

equipment for their horse-riding hobby and are having friends over to the home.

Young people do not go missing and restraint is not needed because staff understand and empathise with the reasons for any negative behaviours. Staff minimise these behaviours by delivering what the therapist calls 'secure parenting which successfully contains default behaviours, boosts self-esteem, and helps young people feel interesting and valued, just the way they are.'

Leadership and management

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

The manager spends a few days each week in the home and is in regular daily contact with the core staff group of three working on rota. This provides young people with very good levels of consistency because the small group are effective child care practitioners who work seamlessly together as a team. All staff feel well supported and methodically supervised by a member of staff senior to them, including effective supervision for the manager. Similarly, there is good organisation and interagency working through regular reports and meetings. This ensures that social workers, therapists, teachers and parents are always up to date with care planning and the daily management of young peoples' care. A social worker said, 'more pre-consultation with me would be of benefit via phone or face to face, however, the reports supplied are comprehensive and informative.' As a result, young people receive consistently good quality care and make excellent progress, given their starting points.

Managers utilise monthly monitoring systems well and send out questionnaires to obtain professional, parental and young person feedback about the home and quality of care. The feedback obtained is positive, and is adequately used to identify weaker areas and plan improvements. However, monitoring about complaints and issues of concern to young people and/or others is held back by the fact that only written complaints are logged in the complaint record. Whilst records of concerns may be found amongst incident records for example, these are not obvious to the monthly visitor or the home manager when they review the complaint log. As a result, trends, patterns and possible areas of concern, such as issues about positive relationships between staff and young people, are not identified for priority attention in development planning.

The manager receives good support from the organisation, both from senior managers and from the home's therapist (for insights about young peoples' behaviour and strategies to manage it). There is a manager and senior staff member 'on-call' system which provides staff with constant access to manager advice, twenty four hours a day. The manager is also supported to further her own professional qualifications. She is ably supported by a senior member of staff in some management tasks so that she can spend some quality time directly with young people without working on the shift rota. These systems, together with a robust training calendar, ensure that young people benefit from confident staff in a well-run home.

The manager has a good understanding of equality and diversity issues. She ensures that the home is run according to the individual specific needs of the young person in placement. She also ensures that learning messages, for example about bullying, sexual and personal relationships, sexual identity and family cultures are always delivered with a high level of emotional warmth. Alongside this, the manager ensures that young people benefit from well researched, interesting theme days, which give them an active and fun insight into the cultures and lifestyles of other countries or continents. However, the manager has not identified how young people are provided with positive male role models. This is a relevant equalities need because there is an all-female staff group caring for young people in the home.

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.