

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC397112
Inspection date	04/10/2011
Inspector	Michelle Bacon
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	07/02/2011
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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 one of a number owned and managed by a private organisation. It provides care for up to four young people aged between ten and seventeen years with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Overall effectiveness

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

Young people receive a good level of care. They make good progress in all aspects of their welfare and development. Young people confirm that they are safe and know any concerns or complaints they have will be taken seriously. Young people are well supported in their education and they recognise the value of a good education.

Young people live in a caring and nurturing environment that provides clear and consistent boundaries. There are good relationships between young people and staff. Young people contribute to the running of the home and are frequently consulted about their care. Young people are encouraged to develop their independence and social skills. Social workers who have placed young people in the home have positive views about the quality of care. One said 'the staff work really well with us and keep me up to date. I'm impressed with the plan for independence'.

Effective leadership and management ensures good quality care with improved outcomes for young people. There is a commitment to continued improvement, although there are some shortfalls that need addressing. Not all staff files are entirely compliant with the regulations. The Statement of Purpose has not been updated to include new staff working in the home and some improvements with the recording of sanctions and restraints is required. However, the home demonstrates a capacity for continuing improvement.

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
26 (2001)	ensure all staff files have the required information in relation to their complete employment history and any reasons for gaps in employment (Regulation 26 Schedule 2(6))	31/10/2011
17B	ensure a written record includes a description of the method	31/10/2011

(2001)	used, in particular a clear description of the holds used during restraint (Regulation 17B(3)(c))	
4 (2001)	ensure the Statement of Purpose has all the relevant matters listed in Schedule 1, in particular the details of all new staff employed in the home. (Regulation 4 Schedule 1(5))	31/10/2011

Recommendations

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

- ensure sanctions for behaviour are clear, reasonable and fair (NMS 3.8)
- ensure where any sanction, disciplinary measures or restraint are used, young people are encouraged to have their views recorded in the records kept by the home (NMS 3.18)
- ensure staff are equipped with the skills required to meet the needs of the young people and training keeps them up-to-date with professional, legal and practice developments. (NMS 18.1)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people make good progress in achieving positive outcomes in all aspects of their lives. They are growing in confidence, and are developing a positive self view. They take pride in their appearance and the achievements they have made. Young people have a clear understanding of their personal issues and of the plans in place for them. They feel settled, one young person reported 'support is good, I get on well most of the time with the other kids. I haven't been in a home that is better than this one'.

Young people are supported to maintain a healthy lifestyle. Young people say they are cared for if they feel unwell and any health issues are attended to promptly. Young people and staff are proud of being awarded 'healthy homes' status recently.

Young people enjoy positive educational outcomes. Their attendance is good and they say they enjoy developing their knowledge and skills. The home recognises that mainstream school may not be suitable for all young people and have secured alternative educational provision so young people are not disadvantaged.

Young people's files demonstrate they are supported to develop emotional resilience through effective key worker sessions. These sessions allow young people the opportunity to explore ways of expressing themselves more appropriately and understand how their behaviour impacts on others.

Young people have well planned contact with their families. Individual contact arrangements are clearly recorded in young people's placement plans. Placing social workers noted that the home is very good at maintaining contact with young people's families and keeping them informed of any developments. This gives young people a strong sense of identity.

Young people are being well-prepared for independence. They are given plenty of opportunity to develop their life skills. For example, they are encouraged to help prepare meals, go shopping, keep the home clean and tidy and travel independently on public transport.

Quality of care

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

Young people thrive because staff ensure their needs are effectively met by providing stability, routines and boundaries. Staff have a strong commitment to improving outcomes for young people and are committed to ensuring they overcome any adversities. They provide young people with good support, guidance and advice. Staff view young people in a positive light and treat them with respect.

Young people confirm that their views, wishes and feelings are taken into account in all aspects of their care. Complaints are taken seriously and dealt with promptly. Information is given to young people on how they can access advocacy services outside of the home. Staff actively seek young people's views about the running of the home; for example menu choices, how their bedrooms are decorated, activities and holidays. Meal times are viewed as a social occasion and this gives everyone the opportunity to talk about day-to-day matters.

Young people's placement plans provide a comprehensive picture of an individual's needs and how these are to be met. This ensures young people receive the right help and support tailored to meet their differing needs. Young people are aware of the content of their placement plans and are able to contribute to them. Staff are proactive in working with families, social workers and other agencies to promote young people's welfare.

Young people live in a healthy environment that actively promotes their physical and emotional well-being.

Staff receive support and guidance from therapists to address specific issues, this ensures young people always receive the right support that enables them to move forward.

Supporting educational achievement is encouraged by the staff and education is viewed as important. Staff support young people with homework, attend parents' evening and other educational events. Staff work effectively with teachers to ensure young people's full participation in education. Young people are supported to engage in activities outside of the home, to pursue interests and hobbies that extend their

skills and talents. Young people also enjoy spending time with their friends.

Young people live in a spacious and comfortable family home. The house is clean and well maintained. Although situated in a quiet area, the house is located close to town centres, local transport networks and local amenities.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people say that they feel safe in the home. Staff work effectively in partnership with other agencies charged with the safe care of young people, such as the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) and the local police. Staff follow agreed protocols when young people go missing. Every effort is made to locate young people and ensure their safe return. Staff understand their responsibility to protect young people.

Positive behaviour is promoted with the use of rewards, and young people respond to an environment where they are often praised and feel valued. Restraint is only used as a last resort and staff are suitably trained. Records make it clear why staff have used physical intervention, however the description of the hold only refers to the name of the hold used. Regulation 33 and 34 monitoring note there has been a significant reduction in restraints in recent months. Young people report that staff follow the rules about restraint. Where negative behaviour occurs sanctions are used, however records demonstrate these are not always reasonable or fair and young people's views and comments are not routinely sought.

Steps are taken to ensure the home is safe from fire and other hazards. Young people are protected by good health and safety procedures. All fire, gas and electrical equipment is serviced annually. Young people are protected by good recruitment practices; staff do not start work until all checks have been completed. A selection of staff files were inspected during this visit and in one case a file did not contain all the relevant information in relation to gaps in employment history.

Leadership and management

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

Young people live in a home that is effectively managed. They are cared for in line with the aims and objectives of the Statement of Purpose. However, this has not been updated recently to include new staff working at the home. The manager and staff are committed to improving outcomes for young people and delivering an efficient service. This is evident in the good progress young people have made in their education and social integration.

The home has had a change in management since the last inspection. However, this has not impacted on the stability of the home or the quality of care young people receive. The new manager has a clear understanding of the home's strengths and

any areas for further development.

The skills within the staff team match young people's individual needs. Young people are supported by sufficient numbers of staff; this ensures they are supported in their activities and appointments. Staff are supported in their work through regular supervision and team meetings. They have access to training to enhance their skills and knowledge. However, some mandatory training requires updating.

The home shows a capacity for continued improvement based on its performance since the last inspection and the progress young people make. Internal and external monitoring systems involve consulting with the young people, parents and placing authorities wherever possible. The one action from the last inspection has been addressed; young people do not have access to staff personal mobile telephone numbers. The home has purchased a mobile telephone that enables staff to maintain contact with young people when they are out independently. The one recommendation to ensure risk assessments address individual risks of young people being cared for on a one to one basis has been met.

Young people's records are clear, well organised and detailed. They provide a comprehensive picture of a young person's needs and progress. They contribute to an understanding of a young person's life. All records are stored securely.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.