

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	19/11/2013
Inspector	Dawn Bennett
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Provision subtype	Children's home

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Service information

Brief description of the service

This privately owned children's home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to two young people with emotional or behavioural difficulties.

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 **adequate**.

There were a number of shortfalls identified during this inspection. While there is some good work carried out in the home, these shortfalls have led to the overall judgement of adequate.

Within the home young people are cared for by a nurturing staff team. They receive personalised care and therapy and their individuality is identified. Young people and social workers are positive about the attachments and relationships the young people make with staff. However, outcomes for young people vary and are not consistent in all areas. Staff are not always challenging schools when young people do not bring homework home. This means that the staff are not helping young people maximise educational achievements or minimise any underachievement.

The up keep and maintenance of the home is adequate and does not present a homely or welcoming environment. Young peoples' records in the downstairs office are not being stored in a way that ensures they are confidential.

There are adequate outcomes with regard to the frequency of young people going missing and their exposure to harm. Incidents have reduced since young people have been placed at the home. There are also good partnership arrangements and strategies in place that are regularly reviewed when incidents occur. However, missing episodes are still occurring on a regular basis. Ofsted have not been informed when safeguarding and the police were notified of three missing from care incidents within a ninety day period.

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
30 (2001)	ensure any of the events listed in column 1 of the table in Schedule 5 takes place, the registered person shall without delay notify the persons indicated in the respect of the event in column 2 of the table (Regulation 30 (1))	31/12/2013

Recommendations

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

- ensure children are helped by staff to achieve their educational goals and work with a child's education provider to maximise each child's achievement and to minimise any underachievement. This specifically relates to children undertaking and completing homework (NMS 8.4)
- ensure the home provides a comfortable and homely environment and is well maintained and decorated (NMS 10.3)
- ensure information about individual children is kept confidential (NMS 22.3)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **adequate**.

Progress and outcomes for young people are not consistent. Young people enjoy living at the home and they make positive relationships with staff. A social worker stated that 'they are well nurtured by the staff team.' As a result young people make good progress in some areas. However, young people's positive outcomes are compromised by this service's adequate impact on some areas of young peoples' risk taking behaviours and safety. Some young people regularly go missing from care and as a result place themselves at considerable risk. These activities restrict young people reaching their full potential.

Young people feel valued because they are encouraged to express their views, feelings and wishes. They plan activities, menus and influence the design and decoration of the home. Young people know how to complain. They feel listened to because key workers and staff make time to talk about their interests and concerns in regular meetings and on a daily basis.

Young people have good school attendance. They go to the company's school and are currently being supervised within school by the home's staff team. Educational progress, effort and achievement vary. Some young people engage well in some lessons and not in others. Some young people have had a number of missing episodes from school with young people from other children's homes managed by the company. As a result of these incidents, strategies are now in place to ensure certain young people from within the company are educated separately. Young people who attend the company's school do not receive homework and are not being supported to develop their study skills or helped to further their educational attainment.

Young people have a number of hobbies and interests that they are supported to pursue by staff. They enjoy mountain biking, walking, fishing, going to the cinema and playing on the X-box. The staff encourage them to use community based facilities such as the gym or library. Young people are not involved in any clubs or groups in the local community. Some have experienced going to cadets and a local football club but after two or three sessions chose not to pursue them any further. As a result young people are not using leisure time to make or develop new friendships or pursue interests external to the home.

The staff work proactively and positively with parents to ensure young people remain connected to their families. For example, staff regularly transport young people to and from contact and supervise contact visits. This supports young people develop relationships with their parents and, in some cases, increase their contact.

Young people have a good understanding of how lifestyle choices can impact on their health. They develop a good understanding of how nutrition and exercise contributes to their good health. Young people are involved in choosing menus and cooking. They maintain healthy lifestyles in terms of exercise and improving personal hygiene.

Young people are beginning to develop the skills they will need to move on into adulthood. They develop basic domestic skills within the home with the support of staff who assess and develop their skills. Young people are developing confidence and beginning to think about their futures

Quality of care

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

The staff team provide stable and caring routines for young people. They develop positive relationships and this positively impacts on young people's self-esteem, and some, but not all aspects of their behaviour. The staff have a good understanding into the individual needs of young people. Care packages are tailored to individuals and have integrated therapeutic input. Young people have regular access to therapists from within the service as well as connections to child and adolescent mental health services when appropriate. Therapists also attend staff meetings to support and enhance the practice of the team.

Young people grow in confidence because the staff are tuned into their individual emotional needs. As a result, young people learn to communicate their needs more effectively and learn how their behaviours impact on themselves and others. The staff promote school attendance by transporting young people to school and liaising with teachers on a daily basis. As a result, young people who have historically not attended or engaged with education are experiencing regular education.

The staff support young people to begin to develop life skills. For example, telling the time, shopping with a small budget, being unsupervised for short periods of time and cooking simple meals.

The maintenance and cleanliness of the home is adequate. Work has recently been completed to the home's sitting room and hallway. Walls have painted and new pictures have been chosen by the young people. There are plans to recover the settees in the sitting room and for new curtains to be purchased. However, throughout the house there are items of furniture which are broken or damaged. The ensuite bathrooms in the young peoples' bedrooms were dirty and the toilets and sinks were in particular need of attention. This did not create a feeling of a home that was well cared for, homely or welcoming.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people continue to develop socially acceptable behaviour and effective communication. They appreciate and value the praise and rewards used to reinforce their positive efforts. As a result incidents of aggression and frustration have reduced, as have incidents of physical intervention. Key worker and therapy sessions are successful in helping young people introduce new coping strategies to manage their emotions.

However, this positive progress in not being achieved in all aspects of young peoples' risk taking behaviours. The frequency and trends in young people going missing from the home are regular, but have reduced since being placed at the home. The staff team is proactively working with the young people and partner agencies to reduce patterns to ensure young people do not experienced significant harm, trauma or criminalisation as a result of going missing from care.

Risk assessment and management oversight has had some impact on missing episodes. After each incident, analysis has been used to put strategies in place to reduce the risk of future occurrences. These have had some degree of success. For example, new structures in education have seen no further incidents of missing from school.

Appropriate partnership work and notifications, in line with policy and procedure, is being undertaken with the police and local authority safeguarding team. Community police officers have regular contact with the staff team and young people. Key

worker and therapy sessions are proactively used to listen to the views of the young people and educate them of the risks they place themselves at. The Registered Manager and staff team are advocating on behalf of young people with their placing authorities in professionals meetings called to specifically address this behaviour. A young person stated, 'I know the staff worry about me and want me to be safe. They are always talking about it with me and listen to what I have to say. When they collect me they want to know that I am alright and are pleased to see me back. I am trying to stop. I know the Registered Manager is helping me to sort things out with my social worker.'

Risk management strategies have included a focus on levels of staff supervision and avoiding agreed geographical locations. These strategies are clearly recorded and available to all staff. The recent use of an agency member of staff who did not follow these instructions resulted in another missing episode. This was appropriately and promptly reported to the local authority safeguarding team. Systems for inducting agency staff onto shift have been reviewed and revised. Risk assessments have been reviewed so that agency staff will not be used in the future to supervise a young person who presents a risk of going missing from care.

The staff have a clear understanding of what constitutes and contributes to bullying behaviour. Young people are supported in key working and school to explore their understanding of bullying.

Young people's welfare is promoted with regular health, safety and fire checks in the home. They are further protected by effective staff recruitment processes, as well as visitors to the home being suitably checked, vetted and monitored to prevent unauthorised persons having access. The Registered Manager and team leaders continue to develop their safeguarding knowledge and have recently all completed safer recruitment training.

Leadership and management

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

This home was outstanding at its last full inspection and was judged as making good progress at its last interim inspection. There were no requirements or recommendations made as a result of the last inspection.

The home's statement of purpose accurately reflects the practice and ethos of this service. It provides a good account of how young people will be cared for in the home and the expectations of staff to meet young people's needs. A guide booklet on the home is also provided to young people.

Staffing arrangements do not fully safeguard the young people. Young people in this home have a range of complex needs some which are being well managed. The majority of the staff team have worked at the home for a significant period of time and are experienced and qualified. The staff team is fully recruited to and there are clear arrangements for covering vacancies on shifts. However, there has recently

been a member of staff on long term sick. This has resulted in some occasions when agency staff have been used. On one occasion this resulted in a missing from home incident after the worker failed to follow a young persons' management plan and resulted in a safeguarding referral.

The staff are provided with practical support and guidance, which helps them structure the daily routines and activities for young people. Staffing levels are sufficient, providing young people with at least one-to-one support throughout the day, evenings and weekends. They are supervised and supported by a very experienced Registered Manager and have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. The staff are completing a programme of mandatory training as well as working through a formal programme of induction. Staff feel well supported and meet with their supervisors regularly to discuss their work and the contribution they are making to young people's progress and development.

The Registered Manager makes appropriate notifications to safeguarding and the police to ensure the welfare of young people. However, when there have been three incidents of a young person going missing from care in a ninety day period they are making notifications to safeguarding and the police but not to Ofsted.

The staff office is located in a downstairs room to the front of the house. Records about individual young people are not being kept confidential. Information left in the office can be easily seen through the windows.

Monitoring visits are routinely carried out and written feedback is provided about the home's operation, which includes areas for improvement and development. The Registered Manager also evaluates how well the home is meeting young peoples' needs and keeping them safe. Records are kept up to date and fully reflect the events, circumstances and progress of each young person.

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.