

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Robin Whistlecraft
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This service accommodates up to five young people of either gender. This home is run by a private company.

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 operates agreed, individualised plans. Young people are making good progress in relation to their education, self-confidence, self-esteem, behavioural development and understanding of themselves. Some of them are making exceptional progress given their starting point. This progress is because of good quality support from a committed and child focused staff team that is led by a clear sighted and effective manager.

Relationships between staff are warm and friendly, with plenty of good humour. Staff are concerned to pitch their interactions and interventions with young people in order to enhance stability and learning. Young people are safe and say they feel safe.

Management practices and systems are generally effective and focused on improving the home. This is especially in relation to putting in place building blocks for an effective and skilled staff team following the loss of most of the previous team since last summer. The progress that young people have made demonstrates that managers are achieving success with this endeavour.

This report contains two requirements and four recommendations for areas for improvement. The requirements relate to the provision of a telephone for young people to use and one aspect of the recording of disciplinary measures used in the home. The recommendations relate to completing some maintenance work, revising the young people's guide, providing young people with positive experiences of diversity and monitoring specific records over time.

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
15 (2001)	ensure that children accommodated in the home are provided at reasonable times with access to a telephone on which to make and receive telephone calls without reference to persons working in the home and in private. (Regulation 15 (4) (a))	19/11/2012
17B (2001)	ensure that within 24 hours of the use of any measure of control, restraint or discipline in a children's home, a written record is made in a volume kept for the purpose which shall include confirmation that the person authorised by the registered provider to make the record has spoken to the child concerned and the person using the measure about the use of the measure. (Regulation 17B (3) (h))	19/11/2012

Recommendations

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

- ensure the home provides a comfortable and homely environment that is well maintained and decorated. This is in relation to carrying out the identified improvements to the first floor bathroom and main kitchen (NMS 10.3)
- ensure that the young people's guide includes information about how they can contact the Children's Rights Director (NMS13.5)
- ensure the daily routine of the home provides the opportunity to encourage young people's emotional and social development. This is in relation to providing positive images and experiences of diversity to help prepare the young people for a diverse society (Volume 5 statutory guidance, paragraph 2.39)
- ensure there is a system in place to monitor matters set out in Schedule 6. This is in order to identify and patterns or trends or issues of concern as part of reviews of the quality of care. (Volume 5 statutory guidance, paragraph 3.14)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Overall, young people are making good progress. Young people learn to make

positive relationships and they learn techniques to cope with frustration and disappointment. They come to understand their background and their earlier behaviour. Some young people make exceptional progress in developing self-control and personal care. One parent said, 'He has come a long way.'

Young people are healthy and begin to take responsibility for their own health. They benefit from a healthy and varied diet. They learn about health risks and their risk taking has reduced. For example, some have taken part in a programme to stop smoking. Some young people also reduce their risk of being involved with the judicial system because they significantly reduce their offending and anti-social behaviour.

Young people's attendance in education is good and some have made significant progress in improving their attendance. Young people's education reports demonstrate that they are making good progress within education. This is especially so when considering their starting point.

Young people benefit from regular and positive activities within the community. Within the home young people influence the choice of food, the activities they experience and the décor of the home.

Young people have friends in the community and have overnight stays with them. Young people also benefit from well organised support for their home contact. This ranges from assistance in organising travel timetables to regular contact during home visits. The home provides young people with weekly funds to buy mobile phone credit. Young people confirm that, if their credit ran out, they know staff would allow them to use one of the home's portable telephones. Although none of the young people have complained about it, this arrangement falls short of the requirement. That is, they need to have access to a telephone without recourse to staff. The shortfall is not having an adverse impact on young people at the moment.

Young people develop skills and knowledge in preparation for adulthood because the home's general regime encourages this. In addition, the home supports the provider's education service by carrying out short, accredited award modules with young people that relate to the development of independent living skills. Young people develop confidence and self-esteem as they develop those skills.

Quality of care

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

Staff focus on developing positive and constructive relationships with young people. This is because they work to achieve the home's ethos - to influence young people through a positive relationship. This means that each young person is the focus of staff concern. One parent sent a card to the home saying, 'I cannot thank you enough for what you have done...You have done so much...I feel as if I have my son back.'

Young people are cared for in line with their individual plans and agreed behaviour

management strategies. Boundaries are clear and staff ensure, through regular discussion, that they enforce them consistently. The home's senior staff encourage staff to think ahead and identify potential flashpoints for young people, including within the home's regime. This means that staff avoid outbursts and young people learn to cope with previously challenging boundaries and situations. Staff take care to explain why certain things are not allowed or not possible at a particular time. This means that young people understand the home's expectations.

The home operates young people's meetings and key worker sessions in order to obtain young people's views and wishes. Staff actively seek young people's preferences in relation to food and leisure activities. Key worker sessions also explore young people's wishes in advance of case review meetings. In addition, staff take advantage of ad hoc situations. For example, the kitchen is a focal point for staff and young people to come together while the evening meal is prepared. Staff use this time to both enable young people to enjoy social interaction and to encourage planning for the evening.

Young people know how to complain. The home reminds young people, through meetings, notices, leaflets and the young people's guide, about the various ways they can raise concerns. The young people's guide includes information about a range of people and agencies that a young person can approach with a concern about the home. The list is wider than required but omits information about the Children's Rights Director.

Young people benefit from a healthy environment. The home provides a healthy diet through a varied menu that features home cooking. The home supports young people to have access to routine health checks such as doctors, dentists and opticians. The arrangements for the administration of medication are safe and effective. Young people also benefit from therapeutic support through the provider's in-house team. This team supports young people directly or via staff, depending on how the young person responds to direct therapy. These factors mean that young people experience good physical, emotional and psychological support.

The home enables young people to enjoy a variety of leisure activities both within the home and in the local community. The home supports young people to explore purposeful leisure interests such as local cadet forces. This means that young people have the opportunity to develop their social skills further.

Staff actively support young people's education. This support includes taking young people to and from school and facilitating homework projects. Staff also work with the provider's education service to enable organised learning outside of school. For example, to introduce young people to educational activities within the home as part of a phased return to the classroom. The home also provides recorded learning experiences that count as accredited activities towards formal awards in school. Staff in the home join with the rest of the provider's services each term to celebrate the young people's educational achievements. This means that young people learn that they can achieve in education.

The home has agreed plans for young people's care that include clear information about their diverse needs. The home robustly addresses incidents of racist or homophobic language. Staff are clear that young people are all individuals with rights to equal opportunity whatever their diverse needs. However, the home does not routinely address diversity through positive images or experiences.

The home's location and facilities are appropriate for its function.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Staff are aware of the vulnerabilities of individual young people. There are clear plans to identify and manage risk. These include actions that staff are to take to address the identified risks. Some plans include diversionary strategies, though not all. Risk assessments and associated plans are reviewed monthly, and adjusted as some risks recede and others arise.

The home promotes positive behaviour by using individual praise and reward. The possible use of physical restraint features as a last resort in some young people's plans. However, physical restraint is used rarely, occurring only once in the eight months preceding this inspection. Staff receive regular refresher training in the use of physical restraint. Records are clear about the reasons for the use of physical restraint and the nature of the physical restraint that staff used. Both internal and external managers regularly monitor the use of all measures of control.

The home enables young people, through careful planning and phased steps to take reasonable risks, such as lone travel, as part of their development towards adulthood and independence.

The home monitors the incidence of young people who go missing. There are clear procedures for reporting young people missing, which staff follow. The frequency of young people going missing has reduced over time.

Staff are clear about their responsibilities in the event of suspected or alleged abuse of the young people. The home's procedures are clear about staff responsibilities, include appropriate guidance and contact details for external safeguarding agencies. Interactions between staff and young people are relaxed and friendly, with pleasant banter being exchanged regularly. Staff are fully and properly vetted before they are allowed to work in the home. The environment of the accommodation is safe and appropriately secure. Young people say they feel safe.

Leadership and management

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

The Registered Manager provides effective management and leadership of this home. For example, despite significant changes in the staff team, new members of

staff quickly adopt the home's approach and young people make progress. There is a development plan for the home that managers review and revise as appropriate on a monthly basis. Managers are clear about the home's strengths and areas for development. The home has made steady progress in relation to the standard of accommodation, allocation of specific staff responsibilities, and the achievement of monthly goals. This demonstrates the capacity of the home to continue to improve the quality of its care for young people.

The home operates within its stated purpose. Managers are committed to ensuring that the resident group of young people are compatible and within the staff team's ability to manage. They have demonstrated this by decisively ending one placement that was not successful. They did this in a planned way that ensured the young person experienced continued support after leaving the home.

Young people benefit from a staff team whose professional development is fully supported. Staff value the regular supervision that they receive. New staff undergo approved induction training. All permanent staff either have suitable qualifications or are working towards them. Staff receive refresher training in core topics on a regular basis. There are sufficient staff to meet the needs of the young people resident in the home.

Managers, both internal and external, regularly monitor standards within the home. This includes monthly reviews of statutory records as well as physical standards within the home. The monthly reviews conclude with comments about strengths and key areas for development. The reviews include some ad hoc comment about what changes in certain records might indicate. However, the reviews do not yet systematically explore or analyse statutory records over time.

The provider maintains the home to a good standard overall. The provider's external visitor identified a number of improvements needed for the accommodation some months ago. Each month the provider has made improvements, so reducing the list over time. However, improvements to a bathroom and to the kitchen are still outstanding.

The home's records are clear, up-to-date and contribute to an understanding of the young people's lives and information about progress usefully informs reviews and care planning. Records of the use of measures of control or restraint do not explicitly include space for an authorised person to confirm they have spoken to the member of staff and young person involved in the use of the measure. Sometimes staff include this information, and daily records usually indicate that the young person has been involved in a discussion about the event. This means while there is shortfall against the requirement there is not an adverse impact on young people.

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.