

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Martha Nethaway
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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 service accommodates up to five young people of either gender from 11 years to 17 years. This home is run by a private company.

This service is located on the edge of a small town with access to public transport systems. The accommodation provides for a progression from one of three bedrooms within the main house to one of two flats connected to the property.

Overall effectiveness

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

The primary aim of the service is to provide a positive environment where young people can be supported to develop life skills and move on into independence. The majority of the young people who leave the home move on into their own property or supported living as they have reached the age of leaving care. Young people are safe and feel safe. The home provides personalised, well planned care, taking full account of the individual needs of each young person. The staff team promote positive outcomes for all the young people. The quality of the relationships between staff and young people in the home is good. The staff have the skills, qualities and motivation to relate well to young people and develop positive relationships.

The views of young people about the quality of care in the home are sought. Young people meet regularly with their key worker. Key workers take a keen interest in the development and progress of young people. Young people are also encouraged to attend house meetings and their review meetings so that their opinions are sought and taken into account, in relation to living at the home.

As a result of this inspection visit, one requirement and two recommendations have been set. This relates to the home providing clearer and more transparent record keeping in relation to how medications are being managed at the home. The current processes used in the home are unnecessarily complicated. The home has also been recommended to ensure that all young people promptly visit a dentist and optician so that no immediate health needs are going unchecked. Finally, it is recommended that all staff complete an annual appraisal so that their professional needs can be monitored effectively.

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
21 (2001)	ensure a written record is kept of the administration of any medication to any child. (Regulation 21 (2)(c))	29/07/2011

Recommendations

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

- ensure children have prompt access to a dentist and optician, when they need it (NMS 6.4)
- ensure staff have access to regular appraisals. (NMS 19.4)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people are developing a positive self view, emotional resilience and knowledge and understanding of their background and confidence in their skills. Some young people like routine, clear structures and consistency regarding rules and boundaries. For example, some young people have now begun to settle in the home and show signs of talking about their issues by discussing what is troubling them. Young people are beginning to show maturity and are cultivating a more positive attitude. This is as a result of staff being persistent, taking time and giving commitment and encouraging young people.

Young people's health needs including their physical, emotional, and psychological health are being addressed. Young people's medication is stored safely and safely administered, although the written records are overly complicated and are not easy to audit. This has the potential to compromise record keeping. Young people are encouraged with their routines around personal hygiene. For example, all young people have a shower on a daily basis. Young people are keeping fit by swimming, playing football and going to the gym. Young people are educated about the effects of smoking, which sometimes young people have considered giving up, but have not always been successful. Staff continue to provide good information, advice and guidance about the harmful effects of smoking. Staff help young people learn about the harmful effects of drugs and drink.

Young people are attending school and achieving at school. All young people have an individual tailored education programme which is adapted and modified to meet their needs and abilities. The development of communication and personal and social skills are key areas that the home actively supports. Staff focus their support on independence, such as, managing money, washing their laundry, cooking and other important life skills. The school staff also help young people to organise and support college placements, work experience and finding jobs.

Young people are making a positive contribution to their home and the wider community. Young people are provided with a number of opportunities to try new and interesting activities. Regular social visits occur such as visits to the swimming pool, gym, bowling alleys, and cinema.

Young people are benefiting from appropriate contact with family, friends and other people who are important to them. Young people are encouraged to maintain regular contact and the needs and the wishes of the young person and the family are taken into consideration. For example, family can visit the home or contact can take place at a venue so that the family can enjoy good quality time together.

Young people are being well prepared for a good transition to independence and adult life. Young people are fully supported and encouraged to look to their future positively through day-to-day conversations and support from key workers. Some young people are also able to develop independence and self-reliance because they have the opportunity to live in a self-contained annex. This helps young people to prepare for and manage the forthcoming transition.

Quality of care

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

Young people broadly enjoy positive and constructive relationships with staff and with each other, and generally behave appropriately. When young people are struggling to manage their emotions staff provide good support. Young people are encouraged to express their feelings and emotions and this is additionally bolstered by good quality key worker discussions. When unacceptable behaviours take place, young people are encouraged to reflect and begin to address the underlying beliefs and feelings. Young people's readiness to change is supported by staff and this is evidenced by how young people show a willingness to adopt new behaviours. When young people co-operate with the expectations of the home, young people are given awards such as spending money, activities and free time.

Young people generally feel that their views, wishes and feelings are actively sought and that they influence the running of the home. Young people have the opportunity to attend house meetings where they can formally discuss areas such as activities, house rules and menus. Staff help young people to understand why it may not be possible to act upon their wishes in all cases. More recently, these meetings have been increased in the past two months as prior to this they were more sporadic.

Young people understand how to make a complaint. Young people know and understand that some complaints are grumbles and can be sorted out quickly by talking to someone. Young people are provided with clear information about how they can complain to the manager of the home, their social worker and are provided with contact details of other children's organisations.

Young people are cared for in line with their individual placement plan and the contribution of the home to those plans is of a good quality and involves young people and people who are significant to them. One parent commented: 'I am happy that my son gets excellent care in the home.' All young people have in place a personalised placement plan that clearly sets out the aims and objectives of the placement at the home. One staff member commented: 'Staff are very diligent with ensuring that the plans are reviewed on a monthly basis with the expressed aim to ensure that young people's welfare is being safeguarded and promoted.'

The home provides a healthy environment where young people are able to access the services and support they need to meet their physical, emotional and psychological health needs. Young people's psychological and emotional needs are being addressed because they have direct access to a chartered psychologist team. Young people benefit because they are learning problem-solving skills and learning new skills to deal with stress. As a result, young people are making progress with coping with their emotional and behavioural issues. All young people's immediate health needs are being assessed. It is commonplace for young people to be registered with a doctor, dentist and optician. However, not all young people have yet visited a dentist or optician despite the best efforts of the staff to make appointments. As a result, this has the potential to compromise young people's health and wellbeing.

Staff are supporting the educational achievement of young people, engaging with their school and successfully promoting their attendance. The school's flexible

attendance options allow young people to settle back into education at their own pace, whilst developing a positive structure and routine in a school environment. Some young people living at the home are on this programme. All young people are attending school and staff take very seriously their responsibility to help young people to get to school on time and to be properly dressed. Staff are good at teaching young people to value education. For example, young people receive direct support with reading and numeracy so that these subject areas can be improved.

A range of purposeful and enjoyable activities are available to young people. Young people are members of local football clubs and also enjoy attending football matches. Young people have access to game consoles and computer based technology, such as laptops and mobile telephones. A number of the young people enjoy meeting up with their friends and this is actively encouraged by staff. Young people feel really positive about their close association with their friends.

Young people's needs relating to their cultural background and personal identity are identified and positively addressed in both daily living and care planning. Individuals are encouraged to maximise their talents and to be successful in their endeavours. One staff member summed this up: 'Our aim is to educate the young people that it is an individual that matters, not their assumptions based on race, gender or stereotyping.'

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people are safe and feel safe. Staff understand their role to protect the young people in their care and provide an environment where young people feel safe from abuse in all its forms. Young people feel protected and are protected because staff actively promote the welfare of young people. All staff have received training related to child protection and safeguarding. This means that staff have the knowledge and skills to carry out their roles and responsibilities effectively. Staff act as good role models and through the company training programme have the appropriate skills and information to care safely for young people.

Young people rarely go missing and if they do, they return quickly. Since the last inspection, no young people have gone missing from the home. Staff ensure that risk assessments are updated to take fully account of risk taking behaviours. Some young people do absent themselves from the home but staff know where they are and keep in contact via the young person's mobile telephone. Staff clearly record these events and inform the young person's social worker.

Young people's positive behaviour is promoted, and physical restraint is not used as a means of intervening with young people. One member of staff commented: 'It's a different sort of ethos to be fair.' Young people are taking opportunities to talk to staff and sharing their views about what they most need. Staff show young people that adults can be trusted and that young people deserve good quality care and respect. When young people do damage property, they understand that sanctions are imposed including paying for it from their pocket money or reward money. All sanctions used are clearly recorded and monitored.

Staff working with young people in the home are carefully selected, vetted and are monitored to help prevent unsuitable people from having the opportunity to harm young people. The company consistently follows the home's stated policies to ensure a robust and safe recruitment practice and procedures.

The environment is physically safe and appropriately secure, taking account of the needs and characteristics of the young people being cared for. Young people have the advantage of being close to a local town which is convenient and accessible. Staff follow good policies and procedures that ensure that health and safety management is being given a good priority. For example, all domestic installations are serviced and checked regularly. There are comprehensive records related to documented risk assessments for the home's operation and for young people individually which are being reviewed as circumstances change. Young people are being additionally protected because they participate in fire safety drills and this means they know the correct steps to be taken in the event of an emergency.

Leadership and management

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

The home is being effectively managed. The provider meets the aims and objectives in the Statement of Purpose. Young people, staff and the placing authority are clear about the aims and objectives of the home and what services and facilities it provides because information is clearly presented and accessible in a user-friendly manner.

The one recommendation from the previous inspection has been addressed. The home has a clear development plan in place which is being implemented and monitored by the interim management team.

At present, there are interim management arrangements made by the company because the registered person's post is vacant. This is despite a recent recruitment campaign. The company is organising a second recruitment drive to recruit a manager for the home. Regardless of this, the home is being overseen by three individual managers who have clear roles and levels of responsibility. The interim management team provide good managerial oversight. One staff commented: 'The managers are visiting the home, working here and helping with the smooth running of the home.' Young people benefit from good communication between the interim management team, residential staff and educational staff and this means that staff are well informed about daily events and young people's progress.

The interim management team ensure that the home is making continual improvements and this is evident with how young people have become more settled in their placements and participating in education. One member of staff explained: 'The home is not experiencing the disruption that was taking place a couple of months ago it is more settled now.' There is regular monitoring which includes evaluating the quality of care provided, including consultation with young people about their welfare. The interim management team understand the strengths and weaknesses of the home and have a clear strategy to promote staff consistency, motivation and support to work with young people with complex and demanding needs in an environment that can be challenging.

The home employs a sufficient number of staff, who are appropriately trained and effectively supervised and supported. Since the last inspection, the home has had a change of staff, three new staff have now joined the team. The new staff are completing their programme of induction and this is enhancing the provision for the care of young people in the home. Staff receive good quality training to enhance their individual skills and to keep them up-to-date with professional and legal developments. This includes the company training programme of 'foundation for growth' which staff are completing.

All existing staff have obtained the national vocational qualification level 3 in health and social care. A number of staff are now enrolled to undertake the additional Diploma level 5. Staff are supported and guided to fulfil their roles and to provide a good quality service to young people because team meetings are taking place every two weeks. Staff are being provided with the opportunities to discuss issues related to the home's group dynamics, peer interpersonal relationships, peer conflicts or disruptive behaviours. In addition, staff are receiving regular support and

supervision, although staff appraisals have not yet been fully completed. The interim management team ensures that the home is adequately resourced in order to meet the home's stated aims and objectives.

Records are clear, up to date and stored securely, and contribute to an understanding of the young person's life. All significant events relating to the protection of young people accommodated in the home are notified by the interim management team of the home to the appropriate authorities and appropriate action is taken, following the incident.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.