

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Sharon Lloyd
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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

The home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to three young people of either gender aged between 10 to 17 years of age.

The home is privately owned and managed by a local company.

Overall effectiveness

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

The home provides a relaxed, calm and friendly environment where children and young people feel at home and make good progress in all areas of their development. Staff are well lead, supported and motivated. They work well with other professionals and provide high quality care that results in good outcomes for children and young people. They listen to children and young people and support them to make decisions about their day to day lives and future plans. Children and young people unanimously report that they feel safe and well cared for, having good relationships with all the staff. They work with their key workers to develop effective and focused placement plans that clearly reflect how the home will support them to meet their diverse and identified needs.

The newly appointed manager is very experienced in working with children and young people in social care but is not yet suitably qualified or registered with Ofsted. Her monitoring skills are developing under the supervision and guidance of the company's operations manager. The staff team have a breadth of experience that they bring to their role, but 50% are not yet suitably qualified in caring for children and young people residentially. There are shortfalls in children and young people's confidential records.

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
28 (2001)	maintain in respect of each child or young person who is accommodated in the home a record in a permanent form which includes the information, documents and records	30/06/2011

	specified in Schedule 3 relating to that child and ensure that it is kept up to date and is signed and dated by the author of each written entry (Regulation 28 (1))	
8 (2001)	ensure that the appointed manager has the qualifications, skills and experience necessary for managing the home, as set out in Standard 14 of the National Minimum Standards (Regulation 8)	30/06/2011
8 (2001)	ensure that the appointed manager submits an application to be the registered manager in accordance with the Care Standards Act, Part II (12). (Regulation 8)	31/07/2011

Recommendations

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

- ensure that all staff who are not qualified at National Vocational level 3 in caring for children and young people begin working towards the level 3 Children and Young People's Workforce Diploma within six months of confirmation of employment. (NMS 18.5)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people develop confidence and self-esteem in a positive and nurturing environment. For example, one young person said, 'When I moved in I felt vulnerable and was doing stupid things. Now I feel more self-confident. I plan to stay here as long as I can because I am settled'. Another said, 'I was out of control when I came here but now I'm much calmer'.

Young people know why they are living at the home and their plans for the future. They participate in drawing up their placement plans and contribute to statutory reviews and personal education plans. This means they are fully involved in decisions made about their own lives. One said, 'the plan is for me to go home but not yet. We're working towards it'. Young people are involved equally in decisions that affect their daily lives. This includes decisions about menus, holidays and daily activities. Staff successfully use incentive schemes to encourage young people to develop the skills they need for future independent living.

Each young person has a key worker who takes responsibility for making sure the young person has plenty of opportunities to discuss matters of concern and importance to them. Young people report they can go to any member of staff with a problem and they believe that staff genuinely care about them. One said, 'I feel safe around the staff so I use them more. We have seven main staff and I get on with them all.'

Young people are registered with local health practitioners and attend the dentist, optician and doctor for routine check-ups and treatment. They learn to make and enjoy nutritious, well-balanced meals that promote their good health. Staff arrange opportunities for them to participate in exercise with their peers; for example, some young people are members of football teams. Staff and young people together engage in fun activities that require physical exercise, such as electronic television games.

Staff make sure that young people receive the emotional or psychological support they need. Young people report that are encouraged to stop smoking and receive professional advice and support about the misuse of drugs and alcohol. They also receive effective advice, encouragement and support from the staff team and report that this helps them to change their behaviours and develop more acceptable behaviours. For example, one young person reported a marked reduction in alcohol and drug misuse.

All young people attend suitable education provision and have high aspirations about future education and employment. Young people who have missed significant amounts of schooling receive the education they need to catch up and prepare them for future employment. They develop confidence by making substantial progress in their education. One young person said, 'I plan to do A levels and have a place at college.' Others are involved in college placements that suit their needs and interests.

The young people are proud of their contributions to making the home warm, welcoming and homely. They have together chosen soft furnishings in the main

lounge and contributed to decisions about the best use of the other communal rooms. They have each chosen furnishings for their own bedroom and appreciate having this personal and private space. They willingly participate in household chores and make snacks and drinks for each other, staff and visitors. They are well mannered and learn by example to treat others with respect and kindness. They report they feel at home and well cared for. For example, a young person said: 'I'm very relaxed and settled and it feels like home'. Another said: 'The house is sound. The staff have a good team relationship and there is a good atmosphere: it feels like a home. Staff have time for us...you're not just a name on a bit of paper.' Staff encourage young people to maintain telephone contact with families and young people report they can use the phone freely outside of school hours. They also have their own mobile phones and this helps them to keep in touch with staff when they are out. They use email and social networking sites to keep in touch with family and friends. Computer use is well monitored and safeguards keep young people safe when they are on-line.

Young people receive excellent support to maintain and re-establish relationships with their families. Having a lounge, a dining room and a games room, the home has sufficient space for young people to receive visitors in private. Families are made welcome. For example, a young person enjoyed cooking and sharing a meal with visiting family, supported and encouraged by staff members. Where needed, staff accompany young people on contact visits and successfully help them to rebuild relationships, recognising the importance of families for young people.

Quality of care

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

Young people enjoy positive and constructive relationships with staff. They value the way staff treat them with respect, warmth and kindness. Young people report that staff care about them and create a friendly, relaxed and calm atmosphere in the home. They say this helps them to stay calm and deal more appropriately with feelings of anger and sadness. One young person said, 'My behaviour is less off the wall and more settled because of the way staff treat me, the things they say and the way they respond. Staff sing from the same hymn sheet so you can't manipulate them'.

Key workers encourage young people to actively contribute to their placement plans so that they are clear about how the home aims to support them in all aspects of their lives. The placement plans are of good quality and identify each young person's diverse needs, including how their cultural, religious, gender and other needs will be addressed and supported in the home. Consequently, all young people know the reason for their placement and are confident that their views are taken into account in placement planning. Equally, young people contribute to their statutory reviews and key workers share the home's report with young people prior to their review so that they are clear about the home's views and recommendations.

Complaints literature is available in the games room and all young people know how to access this and make a complaint. They report that they have never used the complaints procedure because all little 'niggles' are dealt with quickly and appropriately. This is aided by easy access to the home's manager and senior staff. Formal house meetings are not held regularly and the recording of these is minimal. However, young people and staff frequently discuss any issues of concern as they arise and on a daily basis. Young people's views are sought about different aspects of their day to day lives. This means staff ensure young people's individual needs are well met and they make timely interventions so that young people are not kept waiting for answers to their questions or concerns. A young person said: 'Staff listen and they discuss things with us so we have a say in what happens, like choosing furnishings and planning our own lives'.

There are very good systems in place to promote young people's health and the home provides a healthy environment where young people thrive. Meals are varied and well balanced and staff support young people to cook new dishes, including foods from other cultures and a variety of cakes and puddings. Staff and young people sit together for meals at the dining table and this provides the opportunity for sharing views and socialising. Staff lead by example, encouraging young people to clear up after meals and participating in all chores themselves, so that young people join in and are well supported in the kitchen. One young person said, 'There is an unwritten rule, that whoever cooks doesn't wash up'.

Staff know and follow very good systems for the safe administration of medicines and young people are familiar with the procedures. Staff maintain individual written health plans that form part of the placement plans. These identify young people's individual health needs and how these are addressed. Young people confirm that staff arrange appointments for them and ensure they receive any advice or treatment they need. This includes support relating to their emotional, psychological,

physical and sexual health needs.

Many young people have missed substantial amounts of education before moving to this home. The staff team go the extra mile to ensure young people get the most from the education they receive. Staff help each one to find a suitable education package that they enjoy and encourage them to attend, do their best and reach their potential. Staff liaise well with schools, colleges, teachers and the virtual head for children in care. They ensure that any identified education needs are met and addressed. For example, they ensure, as far as possible, that young people do not miss out on sitting public examinations and liaise well with other professionals to ensure a suitable examination venue is provided.

Staff encourage young people to participate in a range of leisure activities. They also encourage and support them to pursue their own interests and to keep in touch with family and friends. Staff appreciate that these things are important in helping young people to develop their self-esteem and identity.

The home is domestic in style and suitably located amongst other similar houses so it does not stand out as a children's home. The office is located upstairs so that visitors, including young people's friends, see an ordinary home and not an institution. Young people report they appreciate this. The home is very well maintained and clean. It provides appropriate security so that it is safe from entry by unauthorised persons.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people living at the home are safe and report they feel safe. They know who to go to if they feel unsafe and there is evidence of young people making disclosures of historical abuse. In these circumstances, the manager and staff have responded well to protect young people and notify the relevant authorities quickly. Young people know who to inform if they are dissatisfied with the care they receive from a member of staff. However, they report that they feel safe and are well looked after by all members of the staff team.

Staff know the safeguarding procedures and display confidence in using them and in working with other professionals, including those from health, the police, and social services to promote the welfare and safety of individual young people. They know how to respond to incidents and ensure that young people are protected from bullying. The young people report there is no bullying in the home.

Staff follow good missing from care procedures that promote the welfare of young people who are missing. There has been a substantial reduction in the number of missing from home episodes and young people acknowledge this marked improvement in their own behaviour. They report they feel calm and settled in the home and they no longer feel the need to go missing or return to previous anti-social behaviour.

Through the good relationships that exist between staff and young people, staff recognise young people's mood swings and are ever observant and alert to signs of anxiety that could result in them going missing or putting themselves at risk of danger. There are individual risk assessments relating to each young person and together with the behaviour management plans, these help staff to focus on promoting good behaviour and to identify patterns that may lead to unsafe actions. Staff intervene by talking to young people and providing good advice and guidance. Through this, they support young people to develop self-control and to reduce their risk taking behaviours.

Staff are trained to manage young people's challenging behaviour consistently and positively. They use sanctions fairly. Young people appreciate the need for sanctions and individuals contribute to the record of any sanctions administered to them. Although staff are trained to use restraint where young people display dangerous behaviours, putting themselves or others at risk of harm, there have been no restraints in the home. Young people report that this is because staff respond to them well and keep them calm. For example, one said: 'I was out of control...before I came here but now I'm much calmer. I haven't needed restraining here because they know how to help me calm down'.

Robust recruitment and selection procedures ensure, as far as possible, that staff who are appointed are suitable to work with children and young people. Staff carefully monitor and supervise visitors so that young people are not at risk of harm from potentially unsafe persons. Staff follow good procedures that ensure the safety and security of the premises. Routine health and safety checks are carried out regularly. Staff and children practice fire drills so that in the event of a fire, staff and young people would know how to stay safe.

Leadership and management

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

The home has been running for less than a year. Young people have been looked after for six months. At the time of the last inspection, there were no young people living in the home and no shortfalls in the service were identified.

A new manager has been recently appointed but has not yet submitted an application to Ofsted to be the registered manager. She is experienced in looking after children and young people in care and has been deputy manager both at this and another of the company's homes. She is not suitably qualified so cannot evidence that she has all the necessary knowledge and skills to manage the home. She is closely supervised and supported by the operations manager, so that she is developing her managerial skills.

Monitoring of the operation of the home is sound and shortfalls in management records are addressed by the operations manager so that the new manager is developing the skills to ensure the quality of the care provided. The home notifies relevant authorities, including Ofsted, of significant events so that they can work together to safeguard young people.

The manager effectively leads the staff team, providing good quality supervision, support and guidance so that young people are well cared for in a safe, calm and nurturing environment. She is based in the home and leads by example, demonstrating commitment and care to all the young people. She ensures that all health and safety requirements are met and that staff observe the routines and procedures of the home. One young person said about the home: 'It's definitely well managed. I would judge it good to outstanding'. Another said, 'They care about me here'. All young people independently commented on the calm and relaxed atmosphere and how this helps them to manage their behaviours and improve their self-control.

The manager is leading the staff team and young people to work together to produce a new annual development plan. Young people's views are being gathered to inform the plan. Young people have completed surveys about the home, including their views about each member of staff assigned to the home. They enjoyed this exercise and provided valuable feedback, most of which was extremely positive.

Three new staff have joined the team recently so there are now seven permanent staff members, including the manager. The team includes both male and female workers, of varying ages. The ethnic mix of the team reflects the local population. Three staff members are not yet enrolled upon a suitable qualification course but the company is addressing this. Although not qualified in the care of children and young people, the staff team have other valuable experiences, skills and knowledge that they bring to their work. They work extremely well together and show initiative, commitment and consistency so that young people benefit from high quality care. A young person commented: 'A combination of things has made the difference to me including support from mainly three staff and having the consistency of people who say the right things to you'.

Staff attend in-house training in core areas within their induction period and further

training that reflects the needs of the children and young people in the home. They receive good support and guidance in meeting young people's individual emotional and psychological needs from a qualified play therapist, who is also available to work directly with children and young people. Staff benefit from having access to a range of professional support, advice and training so that they develop the skills to help children and young people deal with their anxieties, change their patterns of behaviour and develop new skills and self esteem. Professionals who work with the home comment positively on the quality of care. For example, a placing social worker said: 'The manager and staff have been fantastic - very child centred. This home is nurturing and appropriate and staff are down to earth. They cater for the young person's needs'.

There are some shortfalls in the home's paperwork. Minor shortfalls in the Statement of Purpose and the children's guide mean that they do not accurately reflect the service provided, although overall they do provide good quality information about the home. Young people's confidential files are stored securely so their personal and private details are safeguarded. Shortfalls in the information in young people's files result from poor quality information being provided by placing authorities. The home has not been fully successful in obtaining missing information. This means that it does not have all the information it needs to ensure it is meeting young people's needs in the best way possible. For example, not all placement plans are signed by the person with parental responsibility so the home cannot demonstrate it has the authority to care for all the young people. Personal education plans are not always up to date and do not reflect the current arrangements for young people's education.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.