

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Gillian Walters
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This five-bedded children's home is one of three run by a limited company. It is registered for five females, with emotional and behavioural problems. Education is provided in a purpose-built school on one of the company's other sites.

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**.

Young people benefit from well-planned care that is individual and specific to their needs. It enables them to make good progress and achieve positive outcomes. Young people enjoy warm and trusting relationships with staff and respond well to the clear and consistent boundaries they set.

The home is comfortable and has a friendly and welcoming atmosphere. Young people feel happy and safe in this home and understand that staff are there to support and protect them. Staff have a detailed knowledge and understanding of the young people in their care and are well motivated to work with them to improve their future outcomes. Staff are calm and sensitive in their approach which contributes to the harmony of the home.

The home is effectively and efficiently managed and considerable effort is focused in evaluating the success of the standard of care that is being provided. The home is at a stage now where pathway planning is relevant for some of the young people placed. However, clear arrangements for developing this are not yet in place. This improvement is essential to ensure young people have sufficient opportunity to gain more wide ranging skills to prepare them for adulthood and eventual independence.

During this inspection further issues were identified as requiring improvement. This concerned the frequency of supervision for new staff and the quality of staff performance appraisal.

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
27 (2001)	ensure that all persons employed to work in the home receive appropriate training, supervision and appraisal. This relates specifically to recently appointed staff who are identified by the home as requiring more frequent supervision during their induction and initial period of employment. (Regulation 27(4)(a))	21/10/2012

Recommendations

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

- improve the home's contribution to the development of each child's care plan, specifically the pathway plan for eligible care leavers, working collaboratively with the young person's social worker or personal adviser in implementing the plan (NMS 12.2)
- ensure all staff have their performance individually and formally appraised at least annually and this appraisal takes into account any views of children the service is providing for. This relates specifically to those appraisals that have only in part been completed. (NMS 19.6)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people benefit from the stability of a consistent staff group that is knowledgeable and understanding of young people's individual backgrounds and specific needs. Young people feel settled within this home in the knowledge that staff care about them and are committed to ensuring that they achieve their potential. Young people share good relationships with the staff group who provide them with clear routines and boundaries. This enables young people to feel comfortable and safe and have certainty about their day-to-day lives. One young person commented, 'it is a nice place to live, they all care about us, all the staff are cool.' Young people benefit from living in this supportive home environment that allows them to make sense of their histories and move forward with their lives. One young person described the home as 'a chance to start again.'

Young people benefit from a range of health care support and the efforts of staff to encourage and maintain healthy lifestyles. Staff ensure that young people have ready access to routine health care services such as general practitioners, dentists and opticians and more specialist health care services where a need is identified. The home promotes healthy eating ensuring that young people benefit from a well-balanced and sensible diet. Some young people are further supported as a result of their attendance at a local club that provides additional opportunity to learn about the importance of good nutrition and diet. Young people are encouraged to take a pride in their personal hygiene and appearance. They enjoy an age appropriate interest in fashion, hair and beauty and as such are developing confidence in themselves and their abilities.

Young people are all successfully engaged in education, attending a local school operated by the Provider. They are making good progress from their starting points, attending school regularly and participating in individually planned programmes of work that match their ability and support their achievement across a wide curriculum. Young people are working towards a range of qualifications and understand that these will improve their future prospects for employment.

Young people enjoy taking part in a wide range of activities and outings which ensure they have good opportunities for fun and exercise, constructively filling their free time. Young people use regular house meetings to suggest and plan individual and group activities. Young people say that, 'we get to pick what we want to do, such as cinema, badminton and swimming;' 'we give our opinions and say what we would like for the house.' As a result young people know that they are listened to and feel that their views are important to staff.

Young people benefit from the efforts made by staff in maintaining positive family contact. As well as accompanying young people to meet with family and friends, the home welcomes family member's visits. When required the home provides assistance in arranging local accommodation for families who have travelled some distance. This means young people sustain those relationships that are important to them. Placing authorities are appreciative of the support provided, one social worker commented that, 'the home works hard with the family; they are excellent at promoting contact.'

Quality of care

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

The home comprehensively plans for each new admission ensuring sufficient is known to establish the suitability of the placement for the young person concerned and to assess and plan for any potential impact on the other young people already placed. Detailed behaviour management plans and individual risk assessments are formulated and regularly reviewed to inform and support the planning for each young person. The home ensures that care planning is relevant and up to date and takes account of any changes that may occur. Plans are regularly reviewed and updated ensuring that young people have the appropriate level of support and assistance they require to meet their key developmental needs.

Although young people are appropriately encouraged to learn self-care skills that will support their eventual independence, pathway planning has not yet been fully established. This means young people are not yet engaged in comprehensive programmes that will help them learn the essential skills to enable successful transition to adulthood. Social workers are nevertheless positive about the quality of care currently provided, commenting that it is 'excellent, supportive and very child focused;' 'staff go over and above, they have young people's interests at heart.'

Young people have forged good relationships with staff. They share a sense of fun and good humour and staff display genuine warmth towards young people. Staff are sensitive and deal with young people in a calm and understanding manner. This enables young people to build trust and seek out their help at times when it is particularly needed. Young people are frequently consulted about their care. The home ensures young people's views are obtained through regular group meetings, one-to-one key working sessions and survey questionnaires. As a result young people have good opportunity to communicate their views, understand that they can make choices and have an influence in the running of the home. Young people feel confident that they can raise any issues that concern or worry them. Young people are aware that the home has a complaints procedure and a formal process for making complaints. However, most indicate that this is rarely used as they feel staff listen to them and are able to resolve any issues in a more informal manner.

Young people's health care needs are appropriately prioritised and well met. Detailed health care planning ensures that good attention is paid to all aspects of young people's health and that appropriate support and services are identified. Staff are committed to promoting and educating young people to follow healthy lifestyles. They explain the importance of good diet and nutrition and encourage young people to take part in regular exercise. Staff support and encourage young people to maintain regular appointments with local health care practitioners to ensure that dental and optical care becomes an accepted part of their routine to achieve good health. Young people are completely discouraged from smoking and other activities that may be harmful to their health. Young people participate in a range of activities, including walking, football and basketball which enables them the opportunity of regular physical exercise. The organisation employs a nurse that assists in assessing, co-ordinating and monitoring young people's health care. This provides further support and guidance to staff and offers further reassurance that effective support is in place.

The home is located in a residential area within walking distance of local shops and sporting and entertainment facilities. It is well maintained, nicely furnished and decorated to offer young people a comfortable and homely environment. Young people's rooms are clean and spacious and are decorated to reflect their individual tastes and personalities.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people feel safe in this home and reassured that staff act in their best interest to protect them from harm. Young people are for the most closely supervised by staff in accordance with their care plan. However, as trust develops in their behaviour, young people can enjoy some unsupervised free time away from the home, such as shopping in the town centre or a visit to a local youth centre. Young people know that staff are concerned for their safety and well-being and need to be aware of their movements. Young people feel reassured and confident that, 'staff always ask where we are going and when we will be back.'

Young people do on occasion go missing from the home and when this does occur staff act swiftly to report the matter and locate the young person concerned. Staff are familiar with locally agreed protocols and procedures and work closely with the police to ensure young people are found and safely returned to the home. Such incidents are not frequent but when they do occur, young people generally return very quickly. Young people acknowledge that staff respond sensitively towards them on these occasions, ensuring that they take some time afterwards to reflect on their vulnerability, the potential dangers associated with their behaviour and alternative choices they could make in future. This means that young people have an increased awareness and the opportunity to make safer decisions concerning their personal safety. Young people do not identify bullying as a particular problem within this home but accept that if any incident were to occur staff would intervene and deal with the matter.

Staff are competent and familiar with good child protection practice and procedures and have a good awareness of young people's vulnerabilities and their potential for exploitation. Staff act promptly in situations where concerns are identified, providing practical and emotional support to young people and effectively liaising with police and social workers as appropriate. The home has developed an effective partnership with the police, meeting regularly to share information and expertise to ensure that they can continue to effectively protect young people.

Staff are motivated to create a harmonious living environment for young people that promotes and rewards good behaviour. Young people have individual reward programmes that focus on issues specifically relevant to them. For example, success in keeping bedrooms tidy, avoiding using bad language and participating in healthy exercise can result in treats and activities of their choice. Staff are skilled and trained in using behaviour management techniques and favour de-escalating potential situations and challenging behaviour to avoid the use of physical intervention. For most young people the use of physical intervention is infrequent. When such events do happen, staff respond in accordance with legislative framework, only intervening when it is absolutely necessary to ensure the safety of the young person concerned or others. Detailed records are maintained and these consistently reflect good practice giving good account of the event and the views of young people and staff involved.

The home provides a safe living environment for young people. Health and safety checks of the property are appropriately maintained, ensuring that young people are

not exposed to any obvious and avoidable risks. Electronic monitoring equipment is installed at the front and rear of the property and all visitors are required to have appointments or show suitable credentials before being admitted to the property. The home has robust procedures in place to deal with the recruitment and selection of staff, ensuring that all staff are carefully vetted in advance of taking up appointments in the home. These measures ensure that young people are not exposed to unsuitable persons who may do them harm.

Leadership and management

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

The home has a new Registered Manager who is effective in leading and supporting an established and consistent staff team. As an internal appointee; he is familiar with the staff group, has a comprehensive knowledge of the young people placed and the ethos of the home. Since his appointment he has made a number of improvements to recording practice and has been proactive in developing positive relationships with a range of professionals. The home has good contingency arrangements in place to operate in the Registered Manager's absence. The organisation also ensures that there is always a duty manager available to support staff at such times.

The home has clear arrangements established and documented for the supervision and support of the staff team and an annual appraisal to evaluate individual staff performance and developmental needs. The home's procedures detail more frequent supervision for new employees to ensure they have the necessary advice and support during their induction and familiarisation with the home and young people. During this inspection it was identified that the standard for one new employee had not been met. This means that an inexperienced member of staff was potentially disadvantaged having not received the agreed level of support identified as necessary by the home. Documentation revealed that another member of staff had participated in the annual appraisal process but not benefited from this being successfully completed. It lacked the views of the manager and young people, resulting in a lost opportunity for the member of staff to receive formal and valuable feedback.

The home is appropriately resourced with two staff teams supported by team leaders who share supervisory responsibilities. This is reported to work well by staff who view the management team as supportive, approachable and responsive. Staff benefit from having a scheduled training programme of events that ensures the availability of mandatory and relevant training that will continue to support them in their roles and keep them up to date with current practice and legislation.

The home has established good quality assurance systems. The Registered Manager routinely completes regular monitoring of the service in accordance with the regulation schedule and this links well with regular monthly visits carried out by the Responsible Individual. Monitoring is thorough and takes account of young people, parents and placing authorities' views. This activity results in action planning that informs the Registered Manager's subsequent review. This ensures that there is a

clear and transparent record of areas for improvements identified and achievements made. The Registered Manager has also utilised the inspection framework document to prepare his own assessment of the service's progress, demonstrating an understanding of the home's strengths and weaknesses and identifying evidence that supports good outcomes for young people.

The home continues to meet the aims and objectives as detailed in the Statement of Purpose. Managers have continued to develop their relationship with placing authorities, maintaining good communication and ensuring that statutory requirements are fulfilled. The home assists young people in preparing for their statutory reviews enabling them to effectively contribute to the process.

There were no requirements or recommendations made at the last inspection and the home has not received any complaints since that time. All significant events have been appropriately dealt with and documented with notifications being made in each case in accordance with the regulation schedule. The home ensures that young people's records are well organised and maintained. They provide a comprehensive and clear record of young people's needs, support requirements and achievements. Files are stored securely, preserving young people's rights to confidentiality and privacy.

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.