

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	23/07/2012
Inspector	Helen Walker
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	16/05/2012
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This privately-owned home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to five young people with emotional and/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**.

Young people live in a supportive care environment and make good progress in their life skills. They benefit from staff who understand and are familiar with their individual needs and daily routines. However, there are shortfalls in the outcome areas of safeguarding and leadership and management of the home.

Staff ensure young people have good access to healthcare professional. Education is seen as an important part of young people's life and they attend school regularly. Young people are looked after by a caring and experienced staff team. Parents and professionals consider young people who come to live at the home are well cared for and are kept safe. The manager and staff have a clear understanding of their safeguarding responsibilities. Young people say they feel safe and have opportunities to give their views about care in the home. Professionals comment on the very positive way in which the manager significantly supports the rights of the young people.

Two requirements and three recommendations have been made as a result of this inspection. These relate to the lack of notification to Ofsted of significant events, recruitment records, staff induction standards and the guidance and procedure for e-safety. Additionally, that the manager and staff need to know of recent changes in the Ofsted inspection process and the amendments to the children's homes regulations.

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 in relation to a children's home, if any events listed in column 1 of the table in Schedule 5 takes place, the registered person shall without delay notify the persons indicated in respect of the event in column 2 of the table, in particular notification to Ofsted (Regulation 30.1)	03/08/2012
35 (2001)	ensure a copy of the Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and any amendments are kept in the home. (Regulation 35)	03/08/2012

Recommendations

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

- maintain a record of the recruitment and vetting checks which have been carried out on those working for the children's home including verbal reference verification (NMS 16.3 and 16.4)
- ensure new staff undertake the Children's Workforce Development Council's induction standards, commencing within 7 working days of starting their employment and being completed within 6 months (NMS 18.3)
- ensure the home's safeguarding policy includes access to procedures and advice in relation to e-safety. (NMS 4.4 and Volume 5, statutory guidance, paragraph 2.67)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Staff provide good support to young people. This includes support to maintain regular contact with their family and friends. This enables young people to build and maintain links with those who are important to them. Young people comment on their frequent contact with their family and say they enjoy this.

Young people have regular school attendance. Teachers talk enthusiastically about staff involvement with young people's education. They have regular contact with the school and attend education meetings. This helps young people to understand that staff value their education and see it as an important part of their life development and a routine of the home. Young people have good advice and information from a range of health professionals and agencies. Young people say staff encourage them

to lead a healthy lifestyle and this includes making healthy food choices and to participate in physical activities such as cycling.

Staff promote consultation with young people. Young people are encouraged to make decisions about their life and have input into the running of the home. For example, they have choices about activities, clothes, their key worker and bedroom decoration. Professionals and parents praise the tenacity of the manager who they say 'stands up for the rights' of the young person. This includes making sure placing authorities carry out their required duties and that social workers visit at regular intervals.

Young people have the opportunity to learn independence skills such as carrying out routine household tasks. They say they feel confident with the skills they have learnt whilst at the home. They are able to participate in preparation and cooking of meals and regularly go shopping with staff which helps them gain budgeting skills.

Quality of care

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

Young people are well supported and receive care from a consistent and experienced staff team. They say they can talk to staff and feel they are listened to. Young people are aware of how to make a complaint and identify staff and professionals they are able to approach to deal with such matters. This includes contact with children's advocates who visit the home.

Young people have regular opportunities to make their views known and to be involved in the decisions that are made about their lives. For example, they contribute to their review meetings and have regular discussions with staff about issues that concern them. Staff involve young people in the development of their placement plan. This helps young people to contribute to their future plans and understand the reasons for living in the home. Placement plans relate to young people's diverse and individual needs. This means young people's needs are fully considered and progress made to improve their life chances. A parent said their child has 'definitely made progress' because 'staff spend time with them and explain everything to them'.

Staff work closely with social workers and other professionals such as those in health and education. Young people's good health is positively promoted by staff. Young people confirm they have regular attendance for routine health checks with the dentist, optician and doctor. They say staff discourage them from smoking and explain the dangers of substance misuse. The daily routines of the home promote young people's education and school is seen as an important part of their life. Staff have good working relationships with local schools. A designated teacher says they cannot fault the level of communication with staff and that partnership working is 'outstanding'.

Young people are encouraged to participate in sports and leisure activities as well as

choosing different hobbies and interests. To support them in their interests the home has fishing rods, bicycles and gym equipment available for their use. Additionally, young people have days out to places of interest and theme parks. Young people say they are pleased with the games computer. This enables them to play computer games and converse long distance with friends and family. Young people's achievements are praised and rewarded which helps to develop their self-esteem and confidence.

Young people live in a house that is comfortably furnished and provides a spacious home environment. The house is detached, well maintained and situated near to residential and commercial properties.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people are looked after by staff who understand the need to keep them safe. The manager has good links with safeguarding agencies to help promote young people's welfare. Professionals involved with the home say they feel the staff are well informed about child protection matters. Young people say they feel safe, well looked after and choose not to go missing from the home. Parents say they are confident the staff do all they can to protect their child from harm.

Bullying is not an issue in the home. Young people benefit from staff who work with them about anti-bullying including racism. This widens young people's understanding about tolerance and respect of others. The home's current anti-bullying policy does not include information about cyber-bullying. Therefore, staff do not have written guidance to help promote and raise the awareness of e-safety for the benefit of young people.

Staff follow young people's placement plan and risk assessment to assist them to manage young people's behaviours. Staff use behaviour management techniques that support and reward positive behaviour. Staff are trained in the use of physical intervention and use this only as a last resort to keep young people and others safe from harm. Staff manage young people's behaviour positively with no physical interventions since the last inspection.

Appropriate arrangements are in place to ensure that staff recruited to work with young people are suitable and safe. However, written and electronic recruitment records are disjointed and fail to demonstrate a clear recruitment process. For example, application forms are not fully completed and are supplemented by different documents to show employment history. Additionally, checks such as verbal confirmation of written references are not noted on file to show they have been verified.

Leadership and management

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

Young people live in a home that is managed by a suitably qualified and enthusiastic manager. Staff say the manager provides them with good support in relation to their work. However, a copy of the children's homes regulations and information about recent changes to the Ofsted inspection process are not available in the home. This means the manager and staff are not fully informed about changes that help to improve outcomes for young people. The manager has also failed to report significant events about child protection to Ofsted as required by regulations.

Staff are appropriately trained and the majority have a suitable childcare qualification. However, new staff are not inducted to the appropriate childcare standards to ensure their initial understanding about their work with young people. The manager actively seeks training opportunities for staff to develop their skills to meet young people's diverse needs, for example training relating to substance misuse and working with children who self-harm. A parent said the 'manager is brilliant, listens to me and sees how she can improve things'.

Young people are looked after by a consistent staff team. This provides young people with continuity of care from staff they know and trust. A parent said they feel able to contact the home and have good relationships with staff. Key professionals from other agencies comment positively on partnership working with the home. One professional said 'I cannot fault communication and it is a delight to have worked with them'.

The two recommendations made at the last inspection have been met. The manager has produced a development plan for the home. This means opportunities to improve the quality of care and outcomes for young people are recognised. Young people involved in physical intervention now have the opportunity to discuss the incident with a relevant adult. Young people's records are organised and contain up-to-date information. Young people have staff support to engage and contribute to their file records so that they have an understanding about their care and time spent at the home. However, not all young people choose to fully contribute to their records.

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.