

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Linda Brown
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home provides three placements for young people of both sexes between the ages of 13 years to 17 years. It aims to provide a nurturing environment in which to develop and prepare young people for a return to family, foster care or independent living.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: a service that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

Good: a service 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**.

The home has been inoperative for six months. The provider has indicated that the home will be operational in May 2012. The purpose of this full inspection is to assess the progress being made since the previous inspection and to ensure that the registration requirements continue to be met.

An interim inspection took place in September 2011. The home had made impressive steps forward and had responded effectively to 13 of the 15 requirements. However, reporting guidelines restricted the judgement, meaning that the home was still judged as making inadequate progress. As a result of this visit, three requirements and three recommendations were made.

An additional visit took place in December 2011 to assess the progress being made to the requirements and recommendations set. Good progress had been made to address the shortfalls, with all requirements and recommendations being fully met.

The manager and responsible individual are committed to improving the service they provide to young people and have made significant progress since the additional visit. The management has taken the opportunity, while the home has been closed, to review of all the policies and procedures. They have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses and have plans in place for the development of the service. Young people speak positively of their relationships with staff and the support and care they received. The quality of the care provided promotes improved outcomes for young people. Systems, policies, training and staff knowledge ensure that children and young people feel safe and are safe.

Evidence has been gathered from a range of sources. These include the views from staff, visiting professionals and young people who previously lived at the home. Archived and current records are also available. The staff team remains available for work should a referral be made to the home. Additional staff have been recruited and staff are attending the home for meetings and training purposes.

The management plan is to reopen the home in May 2012. Prior to any admission, the manager intends to spend two weeks on team building, updating training and ensuring that staff are fully aware of the changes to policies and legislation. In consideration of all the evidence available, the home is expected to provide adequate care to young people.

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people speak positively regarding their placements at the home and their relationships with staff, which they have maintained since leaving the home. This has enabled young people to make good progress in developing a positive self-view and making and sustaining relationships.

Young people have benefitted from the support they have received in relation to education. Staff work closely with schools and colleges to address any issues or concerns. Young people made very good progress in their education when taking into account their starting points. For example, young people who had very poor attendance prior to living at the home, engaged fully at college. They have also continued to attend and attain good results since leaving the home. This shows that young people are provided with the opportunity and support to achieve their educational potential.

Young people are supported to maintain contact with family and friends. Staff demonstrate a good understanding of the importance of family contact. They advocate on behalf of the young person to establish contact and rebuild relationships. Staff talk to young people, explaining why it may not always be possible to have contact. This practice ensures that young people benefit from appropriate contact with the people in their lives who are important to them.

Young people confirm that they are consulted about the day-to-day decisions at the home. For example, choosing activities such as attending a local gym and leisure facilities in the area. This practice enables young people to make a positive contribution both within the home and the wider community.

Quality of care

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

Although young people are no longer living at the home, staff have remained in

contact with young people who have moved on to independence. Young people speak very positively regarding their time at the home and the positive and supportive relationships that were formed. This demonstrates that staff develop professional and caring relationships with young people.

Young people are cared for in line with their individual care plans. Young people take an active role in the planning of all aspects of their care. This includes ensuring their cultural, religious, dietary and sexual orientation needs are facilitated. Regular discussions take place with young people through residents' meetings and key-worker sessions, to ensure that they understand the plans in place for them.

There are examples of young people's views influencing the choices made at the home. These are the installation of leisure equipment and the encouragement of people's contribution at statutory meetings and reviews. Comments from young people state that 'staff went over and above their role to advocate on my behalf and to provide care and support'. Young people also stated that staff took time to explain why their wishes could not always be met.

Young people have access to a range of services to support their individual needs. Examples include the police; youth offending team; the child and adolescent mental health service (CAMHS), drugs counselling and health professionals. Staff have maintained their links with professionals so that they can re-establish the services once young people are in place. This practice provides young people with access to support services to meet their individual needs.

Staff are keen to motivate and encourage young people to engage in education. They ensure that suitable provision is made to cater for individual needs. Comments from young people are very positive about the support received from staff in finding an appropriate college course. They also explained that they have been able to continue with their qualifications since leaving the home. Professionals involved also commented positively regarding the progress that young people have made while living at the home. They also noted that this enabled young people to continue their studies and have a career after transition into independence. This shows that young people are supported to reach their full potential.

The systems in place ensure that young people know how to make a complaint and access the independent advocacy service. In the event that a complaint is made, they are efficiently and effectively dealt with. In-house training has taken place to ensure that all staff understand how to respond to a young person's complaint. Young people living at the home feel confident to raise concerns. This ensures that complaints are effectively managed and young people have access to someone independent of the home.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people are confident that they would tell staff if they were unhappy or felt

unsafe. Staff are trained and demonstrate an understanding of the process to follow in responding to a safeguarding concern. This ensures that staff have the skills to create an environment where young people feel protected and are protected from significant harm.

Young people who go missing are protected by the actions of staff. Staff have formed good working relationships with the vulnerable persons' police officer. They have maintained this relationship while the home has been unoccupied to ensure that protocol and procedure are up-to-date. Young people confirmed that during their placement they were happy living at the home and felt safe. They state that they had no reason to go missing.

Staff are able to demonstrate a good understanding of the young people and there is minimal use of sanctions and restraints. The responsible individual and the home's manager prioritise the importance of diffusion and de-escalation. As a result, all staff have completed new training regarding this. One of the newly-recruited staff has a wealth of knowledge regarding behaviour management to inform future service development. Young people understand the rules of the house and the consequences if they are broken.

Young people are safeguarded by the recruitment checks undertaken before staff commence work in the home. The home provides a safe and well-maintained environment for young people. For example, all health and safety checks, risk assessments and fire checks are completed within the appropriate timescales.

Leadership and management

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

The statement of purpose sets out the aims and objectives for the home and provides young people, families, carers and professionals with detailed information about the home. Young people are provided with a young people's guide as part of the admission process. A manager has been recruited and there is an application in progress for their registration with Ofsted. The manager demonstrates a clear understanding of her role and responsibilities.

The managers have worked hard to implement change and address the shortfalls identified at the previous inspection. Two of the requirements made were with regard to appropriate recruitment and staffing of the home. The recruitment policy has been reviewed and a robust process has been implemented. This includes all the required checks and the verification of references. Recruitment has taken place to employ experienced and qualified staff in order to ensure that a senior member of staff is available on all shifts.

The third requirement was made regarding the monitoring of the home. The manager has introduced a monitoring system that she completes regularly. She intends to implement the process fully once the home is functioning. Regulation 33 visits are completed and copies of the reports are sent to Ofsted in a timely manner.

In order to improve the quality of these visits, an independent service has been recruited to undertake them. The manager and responsible individual assess this information to develop and improve the service provided to young people.

Three recommendations were also made and all have been addressed. A policy for lone working is in place. A new risk assessment format is in place and in-house training is planned to ensure that all staff are fully aware of how to safeguard young people.

The manager and responsible individual are able to demonstrate a good awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of the home. During the period that the home has been inoperable, they have worked hard to address the shortfalls and implement plans to improve and develop the service. A review has taken place of all the paperwork and the quality of the recording. In-house training is planned to look at the record keeping and introduce more consistency between staff. Newly-recruited senior staff speak with enthusiasm regarding the plans to develop the service and the staff team.

The home is well maintained and regular checks take place to provide young people with a safe and secure environment. Staff are able demonstrate how they respect a young person's privacy and dignity, for example, by knocking their bedroom doors before entering. Each young person has their own bedroom with a key and a lockable cupboard in their rooms. Young people are encouraged to personalise their private space.

The manager maintains positive links with other agencies, for example, the community police officer. This ensures that procedures such as the protocol for missing persons is up-to date and accurate.

There is a multi-cultural and diverse staff team who demonstrate the importance of individual care packages for young people. Staff and management understand the importance of delivering a tailored to service to meet the individual needs of the young people. This will take into account all aspects of their life to include their age, ethnicity, faith, gender, sexual orientation, religious, emotional, physical and social needs. New templates for care plans are available.

Staff have received the mandatory training. Additional specialist training, for example, in autism, epilepsy or substance misuse will be provided to meet the needs of the children they care for. This shows that staff have the skills to provide for the individual needs of the young people in their care.

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.