

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Russell Shackford
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Date of last inspection	08/01/2013
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to two children who may have emotional and behavioural difficulties. The home is owned by the local authority.

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**.

Overall effectiveness is judged as adequate because young people engage in risk-taking and offending behaviours which are not decreasing. There are shortfalls in fire safety precautions, placement plans and quality assurance monitoring. These shortfalls have a potential rather than a direct negative impact on the welfare and safety of young people.

Young people's health outcomes are potentially compromised because, despite good health promotion practices by staff, they continue to engage in risk-taking behaviours such as frequent smoking and sporadic drug use.

Taking into account their starting point at the time of placement, young people are making satisfactory progress towards their desired educational attendance and achievement targets.

Young people confirm that their views are genuinely sought and acted upon. The staff encourage them to make decisions about their lives and influence the way that the home is run.

Staff are well aware of young people's assessed needs. However, the quality of written placement plans is not good because they do not always clearly outline where necessary how young people's needs are to be met.

Young people say that they are confident to complain and understand how to do so. Any complaints received are clearly recorded to reflect the action taken by the staff

and the outcomes.

Effective support is in place to help young people learn skills that they will need later in life. Poor fire safety practices potentially compromise the safety of people in the home.

The staff are experienced, and sufficient in number. All staff have received training appropriate to the needs of the young people accommodated.

There are shortfalls in the quality assurance monitoring processes required to maintain and improve the quality of care in the home.

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
32 (2001)	take adequate precautions against the risk of fire, in particular cease the practice of wedging open doors which are designed and fitted to contain fire in the home (Regulation 32 (1) (a))	09/04/2013

Recommendations

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

- ensure that each child's placement plan is monitored by a key worker within the home who ensures that the requirements of the plan are implemented, in particular by recording how, on a day-to-day basis, he will be cared for, and his welfare safeguarded and promoted by the home (NMS 25.2)
- ensure that staff are familiar with written guidelines on their health and safety responsibilities, in particular about fire safety in the home (NMS 10.7)
- ensure that there are effective procedures for monitoring and controlling the activities and administration of the home and that the system provides for consultation with children accommodated in the home, their parents and placing authorities (NMS 21.1)
- establish a system to report upon the previous six months monitoring of the matters listed in schedule 6 in order to enable the provider to identify any trends and issues of concern so that they can continually improve the quality of care at the home. A copy of every report should be sent to HMCI within twenty eight

days. (NMS 21.2 and Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 5, statutory guidance, paragraph 3.14)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **adequate**.

Young people make sustained progress because of the dedicated support they receive from staff. Young people benefit from the discussions and stimulating interactive activities that staff use to build relationships with them. Through talking to staff, young people develop confidence; build emotional resilience and gain a good knowledge and understanding of their own backgrounds and future care plans. They adapt well to new situations and their view of themselves is positive.

Staff effectively identify young people's health needs and ensure the provision of services that meet these. Young people keep appointments with the doctor, dentist and optician and they take some degree of responsibility for managing their own health. They have contact with specialist health workers such as the looked after children's nurse, drug awareness team and adolescent mental health service which promotes their good physical health and emotional well-being. Young people make choices about their food and enjoy planning, shopping for, cooking and eating healthy, nutritious meals and snacks. However, young people's health outcomes are potentially compromised because, despite good health promotion practices by staff, they continue to engage in risk-taking behaviours such as frequent smoking and sporadic drug use.

Young people's educational attendance is satisfactory and improving from their starting points. Taking into account both their attainment and progress from the starting point of their placement, young people make satisfactory progress towards achieving their desired educational achievement targets.

Young people benefit from clear contact arrangements and understand when they will see significant people. This knowledge helps them settle and enjoy seeing their friends and family. Young people say that staff have, 'helped me to keep in touch with people that are important to me and have arranged overnight stays at friends. This has improved my relationships with them.'

The organisation has its own incremental life-skills programme for young people. These are implemented according to the level of maturity and understanding of the individual. Young people are given help and support with travel, social skills, healthy eating, budgeting, clothing care and shopping. Therefore, young people receive care which prepares them well for adulthood.

Quality of care

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

Young people enjoy warm relationships with the staff and there is a good rapport

between them. Staff discuss difficult issues with young people and challenge inappropriate behaviours consistently and sensitively. One young person said, 'I get on really well with all of the staff and I feel really well looked after here.'

Staff are pro-active and challenging when seeking out appropriate education provision for young people. Staff actively encourage young people with their school attendance, assisting them by accompanying them there if necessary and settling them in. Contact between the home and school is frequent and effective, enabling staff to support young people successfully with homework or personal targets. Staff support young people well in education planning meetings or represent their views if they choose not to attend.

Young people confirm that their views are genuinely sought and acted upon. This includes making decisions about their lives and influencing the way that the home is run. Staff provide opportunities for daily group and one-to-one discussion. This is supported by visits from independent advocacy services. Examples of young people's choices acted upon include: activities, food and personalising bedrooms.

Young people say they know how to complain and are confident to do so. This is because staff have explained the complaints process to them and there is good, clear information in the children's guide. The staff assist young people in making complaints, if necessary and they understand their role as advocates. Young people confirm that staff make it clear to them that they can tell people outside of the home if they are unhappy and provide information and contact details of independent advocate services. Complaints are clearly recorded to reflect the action taken by the staff and the outcomes.

The home's referral system enables the manager to fully assess the needs of the young people prior to admission and as result young people placed tend to be more compatible. Admissions to the home are planned and young people are involved in that planning. Young people can visit the home before they move in which helps them move into the home in a planned and sensitive manner. A family support worker said 'The staff at the home are really good at finding things out and communicating relevant matters. This helped us to work effectively together during the young person's admission to the home.'

Assessed needs are clearly identified within the home's placement plans. However, the quality of these is not good because they do not always clearly outline the arrangements for meeting the identified needs of young people needs. This potentially impacts upon the ability of staff to consistently deliver individualised care and support to young people.

Young people's needs and development are reviewed regularly in the light of their care and progress at the home. Statutory case reviews take place within the required timescales and inform relevant people of the progress made by young people. Following these reviews, the placement plan is updated to ensure any new recommendations are implemented.

Young people receive individualised support that is appropriate to their needs. A notable area of strength is the ability of the manager and staff to quickly and successfully support reluctant young people to engage with other support agencies. As a result, some of their risk-taking behaviours reduce.

Young people pursue their particular interests and are enthusiastically supported and encouraged, by staff, to engage in a variety of leisure activities, such as: the gym, football, dance and bike-riding. The staff have established very good links and relationships with community-based activity providers. Young people also have access to a computer and a good range of books, DVDs and games for education and entertainment purposes.

The young people live in a home that is appropriately located near to shops, leisure, education and employment opportunities. It is on a main bus route to the nearby city centre. The interior and exterior of the home are maintained in a good state of structural and decorative repair. The garden is well maintained and safe. The home is kept clean and there are homely touches throughout. A staff member said, 'The home is always clean and has a homely feeling.' Young people confirm this with one saying, 'The best thing about the home is my lovely bedroom.'

Good policies and practice around the storage, handling, administration and disposal of medication safeguards young people's welfare.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people's welfare is very important and central to practice. Young people confirm that staff teach them about risks and how to keep themselves safe. Consistently well-written risk assessments inform staff of the action to take to minimise any identified risks and this is implemented in practice.

The manager has established good links with the local safeguarding service from whom she can seek advice if necessary. She also considers the use of additional local resources, such as, the community police and therapeutic services to further support young people. Staff successfully engage the young people in talking through identified concerns which helps them develop an understanding of the risks involved and the reasons for adults being concerned. As a result, young people's risk-taking behaviours reduce and they feel cared for and protected. Young people confirm this with examples such as, 'The staff talk to me all the time about keeping safe and sticking to my agreed coming in times.' An information display area has details of local safeguarding agencies that young people can access for independent advice and information.

The provider has good safeguarding systems and procedures which staff follow in the event of any allegation or suspicion of abuse. The manager and staff have received child protection training which includes elements of child exploitation and internet safety. Staff demonstrate good knowledge and understanding of the

safeguarding procedures and because of this are able to promote and protect young people's safety.

There is a zero tolerance policy around bullying and the subject is regularly discussed with young people. This helps to raise their awareness of the issues involved. Strategies implemented by staff are successful in preventing bullying as young people say there is no bullying at the home.

There is good written guidance for staff to follow in the event of unauthorised absence and young people going missing. This is supported by individualised risk assessment records. As young people settle into the home, incidences of them going missing reduce and effective action is taken to secure their safe return. The manager secures good multi-agency working and protocols to ensure a holistic approach to safeguarding. Monthly professionals meetings are held to help ensure that all agencies are vigilant and that current plans offer protection for young people.

Behaviour management plans reflect the individual needs well and outline strategies for staff to follow. Staff consistently implement these to good effect. As a result, there is little use of physical restraint and sanctions.

Regular fire safety checks, general checks and maintenance arrangements contribute to a safe environment. All staff receive fire safety training and in the main this helps them minimise any risks to posed to young people in the event of a fire at the home. However, the fire safety precautions are not adequate because staff frequently and routinely wedge open doors designed to contain fire in the home. This potentially compromises the welfare and safety of people in the home.

All staff are appropriately recruited. Their suitability to work with young people is assessed by the recruitment checks completed, including the completion of a check with the Criminal Records Bureau.

Leadership and management

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

A Statement of Purpose is available which informs professionals and members of the public about how care is provided at the home. The children's guide provides a user-friendly summary of the Statement of Purpose and this is appropriate to the age and understanding of the young people accommodated. Young people receive a copy of it before they move to live at the home and this informs them of what to expect if they choose to live there.

A core staff team supported, when necessary, by relief staff, provide consistent care to young people. Many staff and external professionals highlighted the unwavering determination, resilience and adaptability of the staff team as a key strength of the home

Staff receive good quality induction training before commencing work with the young

people. This familiarises them with the home's written guidance which, with the exception of health and safety guidance, is implemented in practice. All staff have completed an appropriate course at level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People as well as completing training in other child-care related topics. As a result, young people are looked after by staff that are well trained, competent and supported to meet their needs. All staff agreed that 'training helps us support children and young people to improve their behaviour'.

The manager monitors and reports on the administration systems of the home. However, the recordings are brief in detail and do not fully evaluate practice. For instance the shortfall in fire safety is not identified as an issue or reported on. There is no clear evidence that the children accommodated in the home, their parents and placing authorities have been consulted as part of the process. It is therefore not evident how their views influence service development. These shortfalls have not had a detrimental effect upon the quality of care or outcomes for young people but do impact on the home's ability to demonstrate how it intends to improve practice. A summary report on the quality of care during the previous six months has not been completed or supplied to Ofsted as required. The regulator is therefore unable to monitor the conduct of the home in the interim period between inspections.

Young people's individual case files; the home's records and other written documentation are of a good standard. This facilitates good communication with other professionals and ensures young people have a permanent and secure record of their history, development and progress. Case files are stored in a manner which promotes the privacy and confidentiality of young people. Information is arranged in a manner that is useable by staff and yet accessible to young people; who are aware of their right to access the information.

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* and the evaluation schedule for the inspection of children's homes.