

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	10/09/2013
Inspector	Clive Lucas
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	19/02/2013
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This service provides three placements for children with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. A private organisation owns and operates this setting.

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**.

This is the first inspection since the home re-registered after it was taken over by another organisation. The home has a registered manager who provides good leadership and oversight of the home. This helps to ensure that the care of young people is of a good standard.

Young people make good progress in this home. They are able to engage in education and further education with clear views to their choices of future careers. Young people are happy in the home and speak highly of the staff and the care that they receive. Social workers and other agencies are also positive about the home and the progress that young people make there. There are good relationships between staff and young people. This forms the basis of the work with young people. Staff provide clear boundaries for young people and deal with issues of behaviour management well.

There are some changes of systems as the home takes on the procedures and recording systems of the new organisation. This has led to some slight confusion over documents on files. Significantly a result of the change to a new risk assessment process, the assessment of activities is not as robust as it could be to ensure that as far as possible the activities that young people participate in are free from avoidable risks. The home is in a suitable location and is of a good size. However, there are some areas of the home that require maintenance in order to provide a pleasant domestic type environment for the young people. The manager monitors the quality of care in the home and addresses any areas she identifies. There is also external monitoring, but this has not routinely taken into account the views of parents. There is a Statement of Purpose which sets out the way in which

the home operates. This has recently been amended, but a copy of the amendment was not sent to Ofsted as required by the 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
31 (2001)	ensure that all parts of the children's home used by children are kept reasonably decorated and maintained (Regulation 31(2)(d))	08/11/2013
23 (2001)	ensure that any activities in which children participate are so far as reasonably practical free from avoidable risks (Regulation 23(b))	25/10/2013
33 (2001)	ensure that the Regulation 33 visitor interviews such of the children's parents and relatives as appears necessary in order to form an opinion of the standard of care provided in the home (Regulation 33(4)(a))	25/10/2013
5 (2001)	notify the HMCI of any revision in the Statement of Purpose within 28 days. (Regulation 5(b))	25/10/2013

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people make good progress while they are living in this home. They make progress in their education, taking into account their starting point at the time of placement. They receive encouragement and support to progress to further education and vocational training. This will help them achieve better outcomes into adulthood. They are actively involved in choosing their further education courses with a clear view to their future chosen careers. One social worker described the work that staff do in supporting young people in school as 'brilliant'. Young people are also able to develop independence skills that will help them in their adult life and when they leave care. They are actively involved in choosing meals, shopping and cooking as well as looking after their rooms and using public transport. Some young people have bank accounts.

Young people are actively involved in making decisions about their day-to-day lives and the running of the home as well as in more long term matters. Young people say that staff speak to them to help them plan their activities as well as menus. They have also been involved in a consultation exercise looking at the use of sanctions in

the home and had opportunities to comment on the use and effectiveness of sanctions. This has empowered them to express their views and contribute to how staff deal with behaviour in the home. There are regular meetings between young people and staff where young people can express their views. Young people are also involved in decisions about their contact with significant people in their lives. Staff will support and when necessary supervise contact. As a result contact is more likely to be beneficial and help young people develop their sense of identity and background. It will also help young people to develop and sustain contacts that they will be able to maintain beyond their time in care. A social worker described the developments in contact as 'really significant'.

Young people show a real reduction in anti-social and risk taking behaviour during their time at the home. This leads to benefits in their health and reduces their involvement in the criminal justice system. Young people are able to stay in placement for significant times, allowing them to develop a sense of belonging and continuity. A social worker commented on the importance of the sense of stability that the home has provided for a young person.

Quality of care

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

Staff build good relationships with young people and are concerned over their progress and welfare. One young person said that this was the best home they had been in and that staff treat them with respect. A social worker said that staff in the home really do care about the young people. Another social worker said that the staff have built very good relationships with a young person, in ways that previous placements have not been able to. This good quality of relationships lays the foundation for on-going work with young people. An example of this is the support and encouragement that staff provide for young people who are reluctant to engage in education. They look for solutions including where necessary changing schools and continue to encourage attendance and engagement in education, even when results do not come quickly.

As the home is in the process of moving to the use of new recording systems, there is a little confusion on files over which form is used. However, confusion over placement plans does not have an impact on young people as staff have a good knowledge of the young people they are looking after. This includes an awareness of the young people's assessed needs and the agreed ways of working with them. Consequently, staff are able to provide effective and sensitive care for the young people in the home.

The home is located in a village-like environment close to an urban area, which provides opportunities for young people to engage in a range of interests and activities. It also provides diversity that helps to meet young people's cultural needs and opportunities to find part time jobs. The building provides sufficient space for young people. Parts of the building do require some maintenance. For example carpets and hard floorings are stained or damaged and there is also some damage to

door frames and some furniture. While this is not excessive, it does detract from the overall appearance and homely feel of the accommodation that young people are living in.

Staff have a thorough awareness of young people's health needs. There are clear health plans that staff know and work to in order to provide effective and sensitive care. Where necessary they work with other agencies to ensure that young people's health needs are met. They manage the administration of medicines to young people well, keep clear records and effectively monitor medication stocks.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people say that they feel safe in the home. They say that there is 'zero tolerance' of bullying, they get on well with each other with just 'normal arguments'. Young people also say that they can easily speak to staff if they have anything worrying them or they are 'getting stressed'. They say that staff are 'very, very good' and would worry about them if they were away from the home.

Staff deal with incidents of young people being missing well. They look for young people and whenever possible maintain contact with them on their mobile phones. When young people return they are offered a drink, something to eat and the opportunity to speak to someone independent. This helps young people to feel welcomed back and gives them an opportunity to speak to someone of their choosing if they have anything they cannot speak to staff about. The manager has worked well with the police to ensure an appropriate response to incidents of young people being missing from care. Most incidents are about young people who are out with friends and do not want to return at agreed times. When young people have been missing for more significant times, staff have worked with them to help them understand the dangers and how they could more reasonably have spoken to staff about where they wanted to go. There is good liaison with social workers to consider any risks to young people while they are missing from care.

Social workers and young people speak highly of the way staff deal with behaviour management. Young people say that rules are fair. One young person said that 'staff tell you before if you are going to do something wrong and give you a chance to do it right.' Social workers describe witnessing staff being able to calm young people when they are distressed and angry because of the relationships they have with them. Staff work to clear, consistent boundaries that young people are aware of. There are effective individualised incentive schemes to encourage and reward positive behaviour. One young person said 'other homes have set me up to fail, this home has helped me succeed'. There have been times of disrupted behaviour that has led to complaints from neighbours, but the manager and staff have worked well with the local police to address the issues. The local police now describe a much more settled and positive situation. This approach has helped young people to develop more appropriate behaviour.

Staff work to keep young people safe in the home by ensuring the environment is regularly inspected to identify any risks. Young people are clear about what to do in the event of a fire and there is a comprehensive system of checks and drills to ensure fire safety. There is a fire risk assessment and behaviour risk assessments for young people. The change to new recording systems has resulted in the previous activity risk assessments being no longer completed and staff speak of the new behaviour risk assessments. These do not currently include any risk assessment of activities. Although the manager has kept the older risk assessments on file in the home, the changes in the system and staff's reference to the new assessments do not provide a rigorous mechanism for risk assessing activities that young people take part in.

Leadership and management

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

The home has an experienced Registered Manager who provides clear leadership for staff. There is a low turnover of staff. This results in a consistent staff group who are experienced. It also helps young people to form appropriate and on-going relationships with staff. The Registered Manager has a sound awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of the home. She undertakes regular monitoring of records and the quality of care. Her monitoring of records has helped her identify where improvements could be made to provide a better level of care. For example she regularly comments on the sanctions that are used, identifying any inconsistencies and making suggestions of alternative, more effective approaches. Her monitoring reports identify areas that could be improved, such as the maintenance of the building. There is also regular monitoring of the home by an external person on behalf of the organisation. This person regularly speaks with young people and staff in order to help form a comprehensive picture of the care provided. However, they have not had contact with parents to get their views and this does limit to some degree the information on which they form their views.

There is a Statement of Purpose that covers the areas required by the Regulations. This was recently updated, but a copy of the amendments were not sent in to Ofsted. This prevented Ofsted as a regulator from being aware of the change and assessing the need to seek clarification or bring forwards an inspection to assess the standard of care for young people. Staff are regularly supervised and receive a comprehensive programme of training. They describe the supervision and training as of a good quality and effective in helping them to provide a good level of care for young people. Areas of training for staff include safeguarding, missing from home and child sexual exploitation, first aid, drug awareness and physical intervention.

The Registered Manager and staff at the home maintain good working relationships with other agencies such as the police and placing social workers. Social workers say that communication is very good and they are kept informed of any issues or concerns. The police say that the manager is good at responding to any issues that are raised and that staff are responsive. These effective relationships, including good communication, helps to ensure that agencies can work together to meet the needs

of the young people.

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.