

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Joanna Heller
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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.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: a service that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

Good: a service that exceeds minimum requirements

Satisfactory: a service that only meets minimum requirements

Inadequate: a service that does not meet minimum requirements

Service information

Brief description of the service

This children's home is privately owned. It is registered to accommodate four young people of either sex aged from 12 to 17 years. The home engages the service of a psychologist and an art therapist. The setting is a five bedroom modern detached house on a new housing estate. It is near to shops and other amenities, including a primary and secondary school, and has good transport links. The ground floor has a lounge with satellite television, a dining room, a kitchen and a utility area used as a laundry. There is a ground floor room office/ sleep in room.

Attached to the house is a room converted from a double garage space into a games/ 'chill out' area. The garden is mainly laid to lawn and provides an adequate space for outdoor play and sports activities. There is parking for two cars in the drive and an additional two spaces in front of the home. Four young people live at the home, all of whom were involved in the inspection.

Overall effectiveness

The overall effectiveness is judged to be **good**.

Management ensure that wherever possible placements are planned and that staff have sound information about young people at the point of admission. Young people and their social workers highlight key areas of individual development in maturity, behaviour and commitment to educational achievement. Young people also highlight the wide variety of activities provided as a strength of the home. Very little placement breakdown is experienced and young people who have moved on to independent living continue to have a positive relationship with the management, staff and young people.

Young people enjoy living at the home and spending time with staff. The relationships built between staff and young people make young people feel safe and well cared for, and underpin the home's success in nurturing young people.

There are some shortfalls which were identified during the visit. These relate to ensuring care plans are comprehensive, records are stored more securely and that some information be added to the home's Statement of Purpose. However, these shortfalls have very little impact on young people.

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
4 (2001)	ensure the Statement of Purpose includes all the information specified in schedule 1. In particular; ensure that the contact details of Ofsted are included (Regulation 4)	20/06/2011

Recommendations

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

- ensure confidential files are stored out of public view (NMS 22)
- ensure care plans reflect fully any needs arising from children's ethnic origin, faith and cultural origin (Children Act Guidance and Regulations, Volume 5, 2.35)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

The home is welcoming and provides young people with a stable, secure and happy environment. Young people interviewed graded the home as good to brilliant.

Management ensure that they are able to meet young people's needs before agreeing to placements and ensure that young people maintain as much personal control as is possible over the move. Young people who are new to the home are made welcome and introduced to the other young people. Staff take time to talk to the existing young people about how they felt when they moved in to help existing young people empathise with how new young people may be feeling.

All of the children and young people are healthy and staff ensure that they are provided with the support to develop good emotional resilience and increase their maturity and coping mechanisms.

Young people have made friends with their peers in the local community. These friends are welcomed into the home and young people are able to visit their friends homes, replicating normal life experiences for children of their age. Family members are welcome to visit. Staff are proactive in ensuring contact takes place and transport young people and or family members to and from contact. Staff are aware of the impact of contact for each of the young people and the issues surrounding it.

Most of the young people are engaging in some form of education or employment. Where young people have yet to secure an educational placement staff are proactive in discussing their options and liaising with local education authorities. Young people feel a key strength of the home is the wide range of leisure activities they are able to enjoy. Young people say 'we have been on some brilliant trips and had some wicked times'.

Staff support young people to develop self care skills from the point they move in, such as getting involved in baking and cooking, as well as managing their own laundry. As young people get older more formal support is tailored to link with their pathway plan. Young people who have left, have moved on to independent living arrangements following stable placements at the home. Young people, staff and management remain in contact enabling young people to maintain their relationships. Staff continue to provide nurture to these young people assisting them in gaining employment and seeking out accommodation.

Quality of care

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

Young people and staff enjoy positive relationships with each other. Key workers are viewed by young people as strong role models and important people in their lives. Staff ensure clear, consistent boundaries are in place and do not make promises they cannot keep. Young people enjoy spending time playing games, going out and generally spending time with staff. Settling routines are in place at night where by young people are able to enjoy quiet time talking about their day, playing a game or reading books with staff. Young people refer to staff as being people who make young people feel as if they really do care for them and that staff work at the home because they want to be with the young people. Young people say that staff are always available and happy to help young people through crisis. The warm caring atmosphere provides a relaxing and nurturing environment for young people.

Young people enjoy spending time with each other and staff, getting involved in a wide range of activities. Particularly popular at the moment is fishing. Young people feel a key strength of the home is the wide range of leisure activities they are able to enjoy. Young people say 'we have been on some brilliant trips'. Lots of photographs are displayed around the home showing young people and staff enjoying holidays and trips out. These include young people being buried in the sand on holiday, the opening of presents on Christmas day, building snow men, birthday meals out, and a trip to Thorpe Park. Young people who show an interest in a particular hobby, such as fishing, are provided with equipment and guidance and regularly undertake these activities with the support of staff. Other activities enjoyed have included water Zorbing, trips to the cinema and the zoo, as well as what one young person described as a 'wicked' day at Woburn Safari Park.

Education is positively promoted and young people are rewarded for regular attendance and commitment. Staff have established relationships with their local school and are aware of the educational abilities of each of the young people. Staff are proactive at advocating for young people where it is felt that educational arrangements are not appropriate. Engaging in education is a key target linked into the home's reward system. Staff talk to young people about their aspirations and academic strengths, ensuring education is viewed as a way to improve their life chances.

Young people are helped to develop maturity and learn appropriate ways to express themselves rather than resorting to negative behaviour. Staff consult young people on all aspects of their lives and ensure that the care and support provided is child focussed. Care plans are generally detailed and guide staff effectively in the day-to-day support needs of young people, however, do not always comprehensively address issues of diversity.

Staff ensure that complaints whether from young people, or neighbours are effectively responded to, investigated and managed. Young people know how to complain and have confidence in the manager to effectively respond to any issues they raise. Bullying is not a problem within the home and young people are aware that staff will respond to any issues swiftly. Issues of conflict within the group are brought to house meetings for all to resolve in a democratic way.

All of the children and young people are healthy and staff ensure that they are nurtured to develop good emotional resilience and increase their maturity and coping mechanisms. Children and young people enjoy healthy lifestyles and are supported to access medical professionals such as doctors, dentists and opticians as appropriate. Staff cook nutritious varied meals which young people enjoy. Staff discuss with young people the importance of healthy eating and fresh fruit and healthy snacks are actively encouraged. Discussions also take place with young people about issues such as giving up smoking. Young people are encouraged to be physically active and are out and about walking or cycling within the local community on a daily basis. Staff are well trained and competent having received training in key areas such as first aid, food handling, emotional well-being and other issues which affect young people. Management ensure safe systems are in place for the administration of medication, such as, suitable storage, staff training and clear record keeping.

The building provides young people with welcoming homely accommodation that they are proud to welcome their family and friends into. Each young person has their own personalised bedroom which they are able to lock and keep private. Staff are provided with suitable sleep in accommodation. The home is generally well maintained and decorated, however, there is damage in a number of areas, such as the hallway. The manager has identified this and a maintenance plan for upgrading the décor in these areas is in place. The 'chill out' room converted from the garage is being developed into a bright child friendly area where young people can do artwork, play games consoles, snooker and use computers. Young people have actively been involved in choosing furnishings and fittings including the bright bean bags and planned disco ball.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people feel safe, secure and well cared for. Young people feel that one of the strengths of the home is how staff enable young people to mature and develop in a way that helps young people manage their own behaviour and control their anger. Staff ensure that young people know the behavioural expectations and rules and enforce these rules fairly.

Bullying is not an issue of concern and young people are confident that staff will address any issues swiftly to ensure they remain safe. Systems for managing negative behaviour are good and remain child focussed. Staff have achieved success in reducing both negative behaviour and the number of restraints for some young people since their admission. One young person referred to a strength of the home as staff enabling them to become more aware of themselves and the impact their behaviour has on others. Young people say they 'respect staff and want to behave well for them'. Individual comprehensive behaviour management plans focus on possible triggers, providing clear routines and explanations and the importance of setting a positive atmosphere. 'Top tips' are in place to guide staff on how to manage situations and de-escalate crisis. All staff are trained in control and restraint and de-escalation techniques. Restraint is used rarely and clear records are maintained of any restraint applied. When staff do need to use restraint young people are clear that it is done to keep themselves or others safe and say they feel safe when restrained. Sanctions applied are appropriate and relevant to the negative behaviour displayed. Staff are competent in managing difficult situations and minimise the involvement of police to prevent the criminalisation of behaviour. Staff, however, maintain close links with the local community police liaison officer.

Positive behaviour reward systems are in place which formally recognise young people targets and achievements each week. Each young person has individual targets, these are broadly set around education, self care and behaviour. Young people are able to earn up to £20 per week and a bonus on top if they achieve the top level award. Young people are provided with opportunities to discuss how they feel and any issues worrying them following any sanction, restraint or incident of going missing. Regular key work sessions are an opportunity to talk through incidents and young people's feelings. Staff also encourage young people to express themselves through art. An art therapist is engaged by the home to work with young people and young people have produced large canvas pieces of art for their rooms. Staff have access to the support of a psychologist to give case management advice and guidance.

Comprehensive risk assessments are in place for young people which identify their vulnerability and any risks they may pose to others. Activity based risk assessments are also in place. Issues of risk identified are minimised where possible, for example, the provision of window restrictors. Young people rarely go missing as they feel happy, safe and secure. However, when they do go, staff ensure their safety and notify them as missing to the appropriate agencies in line with local guidelines.

Young people are safeguarded from unsuitable people gaining employment in the home through robust vetting practices. Management ensure no member of staff is employed at the home unless checks have been undertaken to ensure their suitability.

to work with vulnerable young people.

No issues of child protection have arisen in the past year but staff are aware of what to do should an issue of a child protection nature arise. Staff receive regular training on safeguarding young people.

Management ensure good systems are in place to ensure the safety and security of the building. Regular checks are undertaken to ensure the ongoing safety of the building. Hazardous chemicals and sharp knives are stored securely. Fire precautionary arrangements in the home ensure young people and staff are safeguarded from fire in line with current good practice. Files are stored on a shelf in open view of people visiting the home; this has the potential to compromise confidentiality.

Leadership and management

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

Changes to the management of the home over the past year have been well managed ensuring continuity for young people and staff. Management arrangements are clear and the home is suitably resourced to ensure that young people receive good levels of support.

The Statement of Purpose and children's guide are useful documents which are kept under review and serve to inform young people and placing authorities about the services available within the home. Information of how to contact Ofsted is missing from this document; however, this information is provided in other places. Management ensure information is available to young people in formats which they can easily understand.

The home is well staffed with a minimum of three staff per shift ensuring staff are available to respond flexibly to young people needs and desires. Staffing is arranged to ensure that key periods of activity are covered, for example, each young person has an allocated member of staff to help them settle each night. A waking member of staff is rota'd on duty until one am, in addition to two staff sleeping in. Staff are competent at the role they perform and establish positive relationships with both the young people and other agencies.

Staff work solidly together as a team to ensure good outcomes for young people. Staff say that the manager and the management team as a whole are approachable, flexible and supportive. Regular staff meetings and supervision ensure that staff are aware of key issues within the home. The organisation demonstrates a sound commitment to staff training and staff benefit from a wealth of training relevant to the roles they perform. Core training such as child protection, first aid, food hygiene, behaviour management and health and safety, is provided to all staff and updated appropriately.

The organisation has effective systems in place for monitoring the standards of care within the home. Any issues identified are swiftly addressed and the new manager is striving to continue improve standards of care.

Staff demonstrate a commitment to working with young people to secure good life outcomes. Young people and placing authorities give highly complimentary feedback on how staff support young people. Young people refer to staff as being caring people who always act as good role models.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.