

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Deirdra Keating
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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 and provides placements for children on behalf of local authorities. The home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to four children of either gender. Children are between the ages of 11 and 17 years. The home offers care and accommodation for children who have emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Overall effectiveness

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

The home provides personalised care that meets young people's individual needs. Safeguarding, health and attendance in education are promoted well. The home has recently accommodated emergency placements and generally the management of these placements meets requirements. The prior planning for some placements has been minimal although, despite this, young people have settled in quickly. Some specific areas have been identified for improvement. These include the timing of initial review meetings and young people's access to some communal areas of the house.

There are good quality relationships between young people and staff. Young people recognise and acknowledge this positively. Young people are supported to have a voice and contribute to their care plans and other records. There are good systems in place to keep young people safe. There is one breach of regulation regarding notification of recent changes in management. This has had little impact on young people and therefore has not affected the overall judgement.

Areas for improvement

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
38 (2001)	ensure that when a person other than the registered person manages the home notice is given in writing to the HMCI as soon as it is practicable to do so. (Regulation 38 (a))	03/11/2011

Recommendations

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

- ensure that a review is initiated no more than 72 hours after any emergency admission (NMS 11.7)
- ensure that physical restrictions for one child do not impose similar restrictions on other children. (NMS 10.4)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people are starting to gain acceptance and understanding of their unique backgrounds. Young people say that staff are helping them with this and that they want to stay at the home. Individual support from staff helps young people deal with the difficult situations they face and develop confidence in their abilities. Young people gain practical life skills while at the home. They learn to budget, shop and cook by preparing meals for the house. Young people take pride in this and proudly show photographs of meals they have prepared, showing a sense of accomplishment.

Young people actively contribute to the local community by taking part in charitable events such as the 'bake a difference' fundraising day. They make good use of local amenities including the youth club, swimming pool and shops. These activities help them build peer relationships, gain knowledge of the local resources on offer and make a positive contribution to the wider community.

Young people are learning about the importance of healthy lifestyles and are starting to take responsibility for their overall health. They eat balanced and healthy meals and have worked closely with staff to widen their food preferences and make healthier choices. Young people are involved in growing vegetables in the garden and this has encouraged them to try out new varieties. Young people are starting to take responsibility for their personal care by building healthy self-care routines with support from staff. They take part in physical activities that keep them fit including ball games, roller skating and swimming.

Young people talk of the progress they have made in their educational attainment since moving to the home. This is evident from their individual portfolios of achievement and teachers comments. This has been of great benefit to young people and has raised their self-confidence and aspirations for the future.

Quality of care

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

There are some aspects of care that are good and areas that require some changes. The house is a spacious style family home that is maintained well. Young people can use all areas of the house, however, communal rooms on the ground floor are often locked. This imposes restrictions on some young people because of others and as a result limits their independence.

Young people have developed good relationships with staff although the core team is small and this means that staff are often utilised from other services. While young people know these staff the relationships are not as established or secure and this can leave staff unsure about when to challenge young people.

A strength of the service is the ongoing consultation with young people about their care and the day to day running of the service. This has been tailored for each individual to encompass their understanding and ability. Staff are adept at finding ways to help young people contribute their views and this good practice is ongoing. This has resulted in young people who know that their ideas are valued and used to make changes to the home. Staff utilise young people's views in changing the décor, developing the menus, selecting resources and adapting the lay out of information about the service for other young people.

Staff identify young people's needs using assessment and planning. Placement plans are succinct and instructive. This gives staff arriving on shift clear information of how to support each young person. Staff ensure that young people are fully involved in planning their care. They use their words in describing personal identity and help them voice their feelings at meetings. Reviews are generally held within timescales and parents report that the focus and quality of review meetings are good. However, there has been one recent emergency admission for which a review has not yet been held. This does not meet requirements and has the potential to impact on the quality of care provided.

Staff organise and facilitate routine medical appointments and specialist help where this has been identified. Staff are vigilant about young people's general health and wellbeing adopting a holistic approach. Care is taken to ensure that possible side effects of medication are addressed and advice is sought from professionals and parents to alleviate possible symptoms. Medication for young people is administered safely with systems that are closely monitored to ensure young people's continued health and wellbeing.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

There are good procedures and systems in place to keep young people feel safe. A range of written safeguarding measures protects young people well. Behaviour is

relatively good and the atmosphere is settled and calm. Young people report that they feel safe and understand the expectations from staff regarding their conduct and behaviour. Positive behaviour management plans provide clear simple strategies for staff to follow and this has helped give young people a consistent approach helping them feel secure. There are a number of instances where staff have had to use physical interventions to keep young people safe. These are evaluated and monitored carefully to ensure that interventions are kept to a minimum. Training for staff is provided regularly and linked to specific incidents. This reflective approach and rigorous monitoring ensures young people's welfare is fully safeguarded.

Young people very rarely go missing from the home. However, in this eventuality staff have developed clear protocols with the police to protect young people and assist their safe return. This protocol gives priority to young people with particular vulnerabilities in order that action taken to prioritise safety is quick and responsive to their individual needs.

Individual risk management plans are compiled by staff and work well. They identify potential and known risks for young people and guide staff regarding levels of supervision. This ensures the safety of all young people is paramount while in the home and enables all young people to access the local and wider community.

The home employs a core team of staff while utilising residential care staff within the organisation from other neighbouring children's homes. All staff undergo safe recruitment procedures to protect young people from adults that are unsuitable. There are no new employees since the last inspection and agency staff are not used. This ensures that young people are cared for by staff with whom they are familiar.

Leadership and management

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

The Statement of Purpose outlines the aims and objectives of the service. These are implemented in practice by the staff team and overseen by the acting manager. Despite recent changes in management the day to day running of the home is efficient and the overall effectiveness of the service has improved. The staff team have worked well to drive improvement and there is a clear development plan. All previous recommendations raised at the last inspection have been addressed and outcomes for young people continue to improve.

Placing authorities, parents and young people are usually given a good range of information about the service prior to placements. Emergency admissions are at times placed and this may impact on the amount of information shared. Ongoing communication continues during placements and this is reported on positively by parents and social workers. This promotes good continuity of care for young people. Social workers report that staff have supported and settled young people very well and that this has resulted in good outcomes for young people regarding school, personal care and the development of independence skills.

Monitoring arrangements work well, independent visits take into account the views of young people, social workers and parents. Additionally the acting manager's internal monitoring evaluates performance and staff practice. The manager is supported well by the senior management team in the organisation. Leadership and management training has been provided and has had a positive impact on the style of management. The staff team receive a good range of training and level of supervision. Overall, the organisational commitment to training and the ongoing support of staff has contributed to young people benefitting from improved standards of care.

Records are stored securely and confidentiality. They are clearly written and contribute well to staff's understanding of young people's individual backgrounds. Recording is good and promotes a transparent and open approach. Notifications regarding young people are made as required to all relevant authorities. However, recent changes in management were not notified to Ofsted in a timely manner as required by the regulations.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.