

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Russell Shackford
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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 service is a children's home. It provides three long-term placements for young people aged between 10 years and 17 years.

Overall effectiveness

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

Young people living in this home benefit from an experienced staff group who enthusiastically demonstrate their commitment to addressing their welfare issues. The staff team are persevering and supportive. 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.

The young people benefit greatly from the staff's efforts to promote the value of education, and encouragement of good attendance. Leisure needs are well met.

The staff work closely with other services to meet the range of young people's needs. Healthcare plans are well recorded. All staff have received safe medication and first aid training. Not all medicines are safely stored.

Placement plans and evidence of staff contributions are well recorded. The facilitating of contact is good. A lack of formalised pathway planning impacts upon the staff's ability to provide individualised transition planning and support.

Fire safety checks are carried out regularly and all staff have received up to date fire safety training. Staff are experienced, competent and trained in appropriate care and safety subjects.

There is only satisfactory monitoring to maintain and improve the quality of care in the home.

There are some recommendations for improvement. These are about the quality of some records about young people, training updates for staff, staff supervision and the quality of monitoring systems.

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
21 (2001)	make suitable arrangements for the safekeeping of any medicines received into the children's home (Regulation 21 (1))	29/11/2011
12A (2001)	prepare a pathway plan for each relevant child based upon an up to date and thorough assessment of their needs. (Regulation 12A and Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations (Section 3 of Volume 3: Planning Transition to Adulthood for care Leavers))	20/12/2011

Recommendations

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

- keep written risk assessments up to date and under regular review (NMS 4)
- ensure that training keeps staff up-to-date with legal obligations, in particular fire safety (NMS 18.1)
- ensure that entries in records are legible and clearly expressed, in particular records relating to physical restraint (NMS 22.4)
- establish and maintain effective procedures for monitoring and controlling the activities of the home and the quality of the provision (NMS 21.1)
- ensure that staff are provided with regular supervision by appropriately qualified and experienced staff. (NMS 19.4)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

The staff support young people using discussion and interactive activities to build relationships with the young people. Two staff described the 'utmost importance' and effectiveness of the staff engaging with young people. As a result, young people gain good knowledge and understanding of their own background, they adapt well to new situations and their view of themselves is more positive.

Young people are encouraged and supported to attend routine appointments with dentists, doctors and opticians and are encouraged to take some responsibility for managing their own health needs such as applying creams or looking after inhalers. The young people's health care needs are included in placement plans which are well recorded. This helps the staff to fully understand or meet the young people's individualised health needs. Specialist health workers are involved where appropriate to promote good health and discourage unhealthy behaviours such as smoking or

self harming behaviours. Healthy activities take place such as swimming, gym and dance. Young people are given choices about their food, and the food served is both healthy and nutritious. The staff are aware of individual young people's likes and dislikes to ensure that they enjoy the food served. One young person described the food as, 'great'. Food matters arising from diversity are well managed. Young people benefit from the staff's encouragement to eat healthy foods and snacks. Young people confirm that they are involved in planning, shopping for and cooking meals.

Young people are making good progress in attendance and achievement in their education. The staff have worked in a determined manner to ensure that appropriate placements are sourced quickly and as a result, young people's education is disrupted as little as possible. This helps to ensure that they can continue to attend and achieve. Contact between the home and school is frequent and effective, enabling staff to support young people successfully with homework or personal targets. Young people's progress and achievements are displayed and celebrated. Staff say that the young people's attitude to school has changed as a result of their good experiences of learning, achieving and socialising.

Staff encourage regular phone contact to ensure that young people can convey positive messages about their behaviour and achievements in school. Young people confirm that they are helped to keep in touch with people that are important to them, and that they can have friends and family come to visit them. This is supported by staff who encourage contact and facilitate visits well. This is done safely and sensitively to protect each young person's welfare. The home enjoys satisfactory relationships with neighbours and the local community. Young people's contributions to community life are mainly through using local shops and the internet café.

Young people are helped and supported in preparation for adulthood and increased independence. Young people learn life skills through taking part in the tasks of running the home, such as shopping, cooking and cleaning. They are given informal help and support with social skills, laundry, cooking skills, budgeting and clothing care. However, the preparation is unstructured and not embedded in the very good independence programmes which the organisation has available. Not all young people have pathway planning documents in place to inform the timing or complexity of the preparation needed for individual young people. Therefore young people receive only satisfactory transition planning and support.

Quality of care

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

Young people living in this home benefit greatly from an experienced staff group who enthusiastically demonstrate their commitment to addressing young people's care and safety needs. Young people confirm this saying that, 'staff are the best and they try hard'. The staff team are persevering and supportive, creating opportunities for young people to reach their full potential. They are aided by a visiting therapist who offers suggestions for practice as well as staff support.

Young people enjoy warm relationships with staff in the home and there is good rapport between them. Staff discuss difficult issues with young people and challenge inappropriate behaviours consistently and sensitively. One young person described relationships with the staff as 'good' and 'really caring'. Another young person said, 'this is the best home I have lived in'.

The staff encourage young people to make decisions about their lives and influence the way that the home is run. Staff provide opportunities for daily group and one-to-one discussion, key worker sessions and visits from independent advocacy services. Quality assurance monitoring by the provider includes opportunities for young people to comment upon the quality of care at the home. This helps to ensure that young people's views are genuinely sought and acted upon. Examples of young people's choices acted upon include activities, colour schemes, soft furnishings and personalising bedrooms. Any cases where it is not possible to act upon young people's wishes are carefully explained to them. Young people confirm this saying that 'the staff are gooduns'.

The staff handle complaints well. They ensure that the young people know how to complain if they wish by explaining what to do. There is also good, clear information in the children's guide about how to complain. An information display provides contact details of independent support services for young people. The staff assist young people in making complaints if necessary and they understand their role as advocate. 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.

Written placement plans outline fully how individual young people's needs will be met. They are recorded with good clarity to inform the staff what or how they need to meet the identified needs of individuals. Staff actions in contributing to the placement plan are well evidenced in writing. The staff are aided in their contributions by a therapist who visits weekly to talk with the staff and young people. The therapist confirmed that staff follow the agreed methodology well which results in improved outcomes for young people. Young people's needs and development are reviewed regularly in the light of their care and progress at the home. Key workers monitor the placement plans and produce monthly summary reports. Statutory case reviews take place within the required timescales to inform those working at the home and others of progress made by young people.

The staff appreciate that the individual young people may have needs arising from diversity. Good planning methodology helps to ensure that young people receive individualised support appropriate to their needs. All staff have received training around the subject of equality and diversity.

Young people's education is a very high priority and it is vigorously promoted. Staff stress the importance of education both as valuable in itself and associated benefits such as socialising. Young people are encouraged to have aspirations and gain

options for future living. The staff team work closely with education integration officers to secure good quality school and college placements. Staff make a lot of effort to encourage good attendance and young people are well prepared for the school day. Individualised incentive schemes support this. A notable area of strength is the staff's close communication and support of education staff to sustain and increase the young people's time in education provision. They achieve this through establishing close working relationships with school staff and communicating regularly about progress and individual targets. Where necessary or appropriate, staff provide transport for school and attend school to support teachers. There are space, resources and facilities at the home to enable the completion of homework or structured home study programmes. A computer is available for the young people to use for educational purposes and well monitored internet access is available.

Young people are able to pursue their particular interests and are supported and encouraged by staff to engage in leisure activities. In an attempt to enable young people to socialise and to build their esteem and confidence, young people's involvement is well supported by staff who explore their individual choices, likes and dislikes. Structured activity programmes are used to provide opportunities and continuity of attendance. The staff have established very good links and relationships with community based activity providers. Examples of organised activities include dance, drama, youth club, scouts, archery, fishing swimming and gym. There is also a good range of books, DVDs and games available for education and entertainment.

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 town centre. The interior and exterior of the home are maintained in a good state of structural and decorative repair. There is a satisfactory maintenance and repair programme for the building, furniture and equipment, and any damage is repaired promptly. The garden is well maintained and safe. The home is kept clean and there are homely touches throughout.

Good policies and procedures around the storage, handling, administration and disposal of medication safeguards young people's welfare. However, not all prescribed medication is securely stored because large skin lotion containers which will not fit in the medicine cabinet are stored outside of it. All staff have received up to date safe medication and first aid training.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Staff describe safeguarding young people as, 'very important'. Young people confirm that they are supported to learn how to keep themselves safe and learn about risks. Where particular risks are identified, written risk assessments are recorded. However, they are not always up to date to help the staff understand what action to take to minimise the identified risks. The manager has established good links with the local safeguarding service from whom she can seek advice if necessary. The manager engages local resources that may further support young people, for

example, community police and independent advocacy services.

The staff engage the young people in talking through any identified concerns to develop young people's own understanding of concerns and the reasons adults are 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, 'staff talk to me about keeping safe by keeping my details private when using social networking websites.'

The manager has established strong links with the Local Safeguarding Children Team. An information display area has details of local agencies that young people can access for advice and information. Staff use team meetings and sessions with the therapist to ensure that everyone is up-to-date about how to promote and protect the young people's safety.

The provider has very good safeguarding systems and procedures for staff to 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 on-line protection. Staff demonstrate good knowledge and understanding of the safeguarding procedures to promote and protect young people's safety. Anti-bullying messages are displayed and the subject is regularly discussed at young people's meetings. There is good written guidance for staff to follow in the event of unauthorised absence. This is supported by a social services and police service jointly agreed protocol. The manager secures good multi-agency working, for example, liaising with the local community police and social workers to ensure a holistic approach to safeguarding.

Behaviour management techniques are individually applied. Sanctions are relevant and reflect the age and understanding of the young people. They are reviewed regularly for effectiveness. Physical restraint is very rarely used to manage behaviour. Staff are trained in the provider's policy and authorised techniques. Record keeping is not good because they are not always written with sufficient clarity to make clear the reasons for, or the type of intervention used. The manager has signed the records to show that it is regularly monitored to identify patterns or trends that can be used to support young people further.

Regular fire safety checks help to ensure that young people's physical safety from fire in the home is well protected. All staff working at the home have received fire safety training to enable them to minimise the risks to young people in the event of a fire at the home. However, the required refresher training has not been arranged in a timely manner resulting in some staff having out of date training certificates. Good checks and maintenance arrangements ensure the home is physically safe and is kept safe.

All staff have been appropriately recruited and undergone suitable Criminal Records Bureau checks to ensure that they are suitable to work with young people. Staff confirm this.

Leadership and management

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

A Statement of Purpose is available to inform professionals and members of the public about how care is provided at the home. There is a good children's guide to the statement which is appropriate to the age and understanding of the children accommodated. Young people receive a copy of it before they come to live at the home so that they know what to expect if they choose to live there.

There is a consistent staff team with a range of experience and skills. New members of staff receive good quality induction training before commencing work with the young people. Staff refer to written guidance frequently during discussion and give examples of how it is implemented in practice. A visiting therapist provides opportunities for staff to discuss care practices and behaviour management strategies. This support and the managers supervision are described as, 'very helpful and supportive' by staff who clearly value the beneficial contributions. However, not all staff have received up-to-date supervision sessions.

Staff are trained in a wide variety of safety and childcare subjects. An ongoing programme of regular refresher training is provided in a range of subjects to enhance the staff team's competency to meet the needs of the young people. However, the required refresher training has not always been arranged in a timely manner resulting in some staff having out of date training certificates.

The manager is beginning to incorporate new legislation and practice developments into the service. She also has a system to identify the strengths and weaknesses within the service although these have not yet been formulated into development plans. There is a system to monitor, report and evaluate the administration systems of the home and identify any areas of weakness. This is supported by regular visits from an employee of the organisation to check the quality of care at the home. However, these quality assurance systems have failed to identify or adequately address some of the care and safety matters raised in this report. Therefore, there is only satisfactory monitoring of the quality of care for the young people in the home.

Appropriate action has been taken to address the previous recommendation about staff training. A minimum ratio of 80% of all care staff have completed a National Vocational Qualification at level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People.

The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Staff have a good understanding of individual young people's needs. Staff also demonstrate good practice around equality and diversity through their attitude towards it and by giving examples of this in practice, such as promoting and securing education for each young person, individualised daily living plans and encouraging respect of difference in others. Practice which is less than good includes individualised transition planning and individual risk management. Young people have access to a team that is balanced in terms of race, age, background and gender, and have access to a variety of services in the local and wider community.

Equality and diversity practice is **satisfactory**.