

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Rachel Ruth Britten
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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 progress made by the provider since the last full inspection, identifies any further strengths, any areas for improvement and makes judgements as outlined in the *Inspection of children's homes – framework for inspection (March 2011)*.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Good progress	The children's home has demonstrated continued improvement in quality of care and outcomes for children and young people and where appropriate has addressed all requirements and the large majority of recommendations that were raised at the previous inspection.
Satisfactory progress	The children's home has maintained quality of care and outcomes for children and young people and where appropriate has addressed all requirements and the majority of recommendations that were raised at the previous inspection.
Inadequate progress	The children's home has failed to address one or more requirements and/or has not met the majority of recommendations and/or the quality of care and outcomes for children and young people have declined since the last full inspection.

Service information

Brief description of the service

The home offers long term care for up to seven children and young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties. A private company operates this home alongside its other home.

Progress

Since their previous inspection the service is judged to be making **satisfactory** progress.

The children's home has continued to provide good quality of care in the period since the last inspection. Staff have maintained consistent levels of care and each young person has enjoyed a long period of stability in the home. As a result, the outcomes for young people continue to be good overall. The home has been overseen by the manager of the sister home. This acting manager has ensured, through work with the staff group, that the requirements and recommendations that were raised at the previous inspection have been satisfactorily addressed. However, the interim management arrangements are not conducive to rapid improvements or innovations. For example, development planning and monitoring do not presently maximise continuous and timely improvements. In addition, necessary professional training is still not being embarked upon within the timescales required by the minimum standard.

Young people are now more involved in the updating of their files and records in a few significant ways. For example, a simple format has been devised for young people to use when planning with their key worker for what they want to achieve in areas such as education and 'tough times'. Staff are also thinking more about how to use incident records, risk assessments and review documents alongside young people. This is so they are a working tool which helps young people understand what is happening in their lives and how they can learn from events. There is an increase in the exchange of formats and ideas between the two homes in the organisation which helps identify better ways of engaging young people in their records. More work is going on to help young people collect memorabilia, such as photographs of their time in placement. However, young people are often still quite disinterested in either reading their records or putting together memories and souvenirs. The support and encouragement they receive from staff does not yet extend sufficiently far to maximise and sustain the use of records and memories to help young people progress and celebrate this.

Young people's rights and responsibilities are better explained and served by the action that has been taken following the last inspection. For example, their rights to complain to Ofsted and to contact their Independent Reviewing Officer are better served because written contact information for these is now on the complaints

procedure and in the young people's guide. Similarly, the written policy concerning electronic monitoring devices has been much improved. It now clearly informs young people about how they are protected by the use of electronic bedroom door alarms and also how they are protected from the misuse of such devices.

Young people are benefitting from more informed choices and decisions about healthy lifestyles. For example, they are much more involved in preparing and eating varied and nutritious food. Fruit and vegetable smoothies and homemade meals using fresh vegetables, carbohydrates and proteins are now regularly enjoyed. Young people continue to be encouraged to be active and follow sports and outdoor activity interests too. Socially, the arrangements for young people to have friends to visit have been made much clearer. There is an appropriate balance with reasonable flexibility taking into account each young person's risks and placement agreements. As a result, young people and staff enjoy more appropriate parent-to-child relationships with respect to daily decisions about their free time activities.

There has been no Registered Manager in the setting since the last inspection. This breach of regulation is currently being addressed through a recruitment programme. The head of care, the acting manager from the sister home, and the deputy manager, agreed that a lengthy period was needed to consolidate the staff and young people group and focus on practice and morale issues. For example, they have introduced regular meetings for staff to talk about their direct input with individual young people. This is helping staff to consistently and more effectively address young people's individual needs through better teaching, advice, discussion and using of everyday opportunities. This has enabled young people to address issues positively and enjoy a period of stability with no change to the resident group. They are settled and continue to make progress as a result.

Managers have focused on addressing the weaknesses identified at the last inspection. They also make positive use of informative regulation 33 reports which include effective consultation with young people. The acting manager has sustained regular monitoring of the matters in Schedule 6 of regulation 34 and this ensures that standards remain good in the home. Weekly progress reports go to placing authorities on each young person's progress and young people are informed about changes that the staff are making. However, there is no regular consultation with young people, parents and placing authorities as part of the home's own monitoring. The views of, and feedback from, these parties is not feeding into monitoring findings or being used to nurture positive working relationships. In addition, the identified required actions arising from regulation 33 and 34 monitoring are not yet feeding into any clear written annual development plan for the home. Some improvements, such as required professional training for all staff and engaging young people effectively in their records, are therefore being implemented too slowly.

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
7 (2001)	appoint an individual to manage the children's home and then forthwith give notice to the HMCI of the person so appointed and the date on which the appointment is to take effect. (Regulation 7)	18/02/2011

Recommendations

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

- provide a written development plan for the home which is reviewed annually, identifying any planned changes in the operation or resources of the service (NMS 15.2)
- ensure that all existing care staff are working towards the Diploma within six months of confirmation of employment (NMS 18.5)
- ensure that young people are regularly contributing to monitoring the operation of the home. (NMS 21.1)