

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Mandy Williams
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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 is one of a number of children's homes run by a private organisation. This home provides care for up to four young people aged between 11 and 17 years, who may be experiencing emotional and/or behavioural difficulties, or have a learning disability.

Progress

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

At the last full inspection in early January 2012, the overall effectiveness of the home was judged to be good. The full inspection took place just seven weeks ago and unfortunately, the Registered Manager was not in receipt of the completed report at the start of this inspection.

At the time of the last inspection, Ofsted asked the provider to make improvements in four areas. These were to ensure that behaviour management did not involve the restriction of food; that the lounge door was not locked during the day as a measure of control; that young people received a personal allowance appropriate to their age and understanding, and that staff were familiar with young people's pathway plans.

The issue in relation to the restriction of food related to young people not being given the opportunity to have a hot meal if they returned to the home late at night. The Registered Manager has subsequently raised this issue at young people's meetings. The time of 10.30pm has been agreed with young people, before which time they will receive a hot meal and following this agreed time, they will be receive a drink and a sandwich or cold snack. This appears fair and reasonable and young people understand this arrangement.

The unnecessary restriction of locking the lounge door during the school day is no longer imposed. Young people continue to receive a small basic personal allowance and have the opportunity to increase this significantly if they conform to the house rules and engage in education. This philosophy is implemented across the organisation's homes. Young people report that they feel this system is fair. They are clear how it operates and feel that it is right for this to be based on their achievements during the week.

All young people resident in the home have a pathway plan as they are all in the process of transition to independent living. These have been reviewed, and staff are clear about their roles in implementing these plans. The Registered Manager has also been pro-active in contacting the appropriate local authorities to follow up any issues and formalise any review. The home is good at enabling young people to develop the skills necessary for independent living and has a planned programme of tasks and

activities that they support young people to complete. These life skills will increase the chances of young people being successful when they move on from the home.

Young people contribute to the running of the home and their views are sought by the means of weekly young people's meetings. Young people say that they feel safe living here and staff listen to them. There are no bullying issues in the home. Young people know how to make a complaint should they wish to do so. They are supported through this process by staff, or they have access to an independent advocate. Young people say: 'this is a good home, I like living here and staff have helped me sort out my issues'.

The home encourages family members and involved professionals to comment on the service provided. Consultation forms are forwarded on a regular basis and the responses are used to inform future development. Family members say that they are always updated about any developments and are always made to feel welcome by the staff in the home. They are very pleased with the progress that young people have made since moving to live at the home. Staff have also developed a very positive relationship with the local police. Recent comments include: 'I have a good relationship with the staff at the home. They are excellent at passing on information and communicating with the police; are always welcoming, and have the best interests of the young people at heart'.

The staff group in the home has remained largely stable, which means that young people have benefitted from a consistency of care. There have, however, been some minor changes that are not currently reflected in the home's Statement of Purpose. The Statement also requires the recording of the date at the time of its revision so that it is clear that the version being considered is in fact the most current one.

The home's ethos is to reward positive behaviour rather than to impose sanctions for negative behaviour. Since the last inspection, the number of rewards earned by young people has significantly outnumbered the sanctions imposed. Rewards have included the purchase of a book chosen by the young person, a take-away meal and a special activity. Young people have the opportunity to comment on both the rewards and sanctions imposed. They appear to thrive on this approach.

In the limited time that has elapsed since the last inspection, the home has demonstrated a continued commitment to improve the quality of care and outcomes for young people. They have identified triggers that have the potential to result in negative behaviours by young people; these are in addition to their individualised risk assessments. Staff are alert to these triggers and hence better prepared to respond to a young person's state of anxiety. Alterations have also been made to the planners used by young people which outline their activities for the week ahead. These are now colour coded and so enable young people with poor literacy skills to see at a glance what their plan for the day includes. This demonstrates the home's ability to respond to the individual needs of the young people in their care.

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 that the Statement of Purpose consists of all matters listed in Schedule 1; in particular, that it accurately reflects the staff members working in the home and that the document is dated. (Regulation 4 (1))	09/04/2012

Recommendations

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