

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Paula Lahey
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This privately owned home provides care and accommodation for up to five young people, who may have emotional and behavioural problems. Some young people may also have specific learning disabilities.

The provision is registered with the Department for Education to provide education on site for young people who live in one of the three home's run by the provider.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: a service that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

Good: a service that exceeds minimum requirements

Adequate: a service that only meets minimum requirements

Inadequate: a service that does not meet minimum requirements

Overall effectiveness

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

The service has a positive impact on developing young people's personal development, physical and emotional health, and achieves good outcomes for their learning, well-being and safety. The promotion of equality and personalisation runs throughout all care practice and documentation. Each young person is valued, treated fairly and is supported to reach their full potential; consequently they have made good progress from their starting point on arrival.

The positive approach to behaviour management has helped develop young people's personal control and anger management; this results in good relationships and decreasing incidents of risk-taking behaviour. A recommendation has been raised relating to de-briefing of young people following a physical intervention. Safeguarding arrangements continue to benefit young people. Young people communicate that they feel safe and secure in the home; this is supported by the excellent relationships they have with members of staff and each other.

The home is well organised and managed. This is strengthened with an experienced and competent care team who demonstrate enthusiasm for their work. Young people's needs and well-being are at the centre of practice. The home carries out comprehensive and child-focused Regulation 34 monitoring. The findings from these reviews assist the home to identify strengths and areas for development. A requirement has been raised to ensure that copies of the review of monitoring are supplied to HMCI at regular intervals.

The home is well-maintained, furnished and decorated. A recommendation has been made to enhance the homely feel of the provision.

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
34 (2001)	ensure the registered person supplies to the HMCI an overview report in respect of all matters monitored in Schedule 6 (regulation 34 (1)(a)(b)), at appropriate intervals. (Regulation 34 (2))	02/07/2012

Recommendations

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

- ensure that all children and staff are given an opportunity to discuss incidents of restraint they have been involved in, witnessed or been affected by, with a relevant adult. This relates specifically to ensuring that the adult is a person independent of the restraint and that details of the discussion are documented in the restraint records (NMS 3.17)
- ensure that the home provides a comfortable and homely environment as is consistent with a domestic setting. (NMS 10.3)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people have made good progress towards meeting their individual aims at the placement; particularly in relation to developing appropriate behaviour, attending education, developing self-esteem and confidence.

Young people are developing good social and communication skills. Young people say they have learnt to be more respectful to others, that they have significantly decreased swearing and stopped using 'slang and street style' language since moving into the home. Other young people say they have learnt how to live more amicably with others; they are learning to negotiate and compromise with other young people and staff. One young person says he has taken these skills to his family life and has found he now gets on better with his siblings.

Young people say they enjoy learning and particularly benefit from the experiences they have at forest school. Young people who have previously been out of education prior to placement in the home have made good progress to engage and their attendance has increased significantly. Subsequently, providers have been able to formally assess young people and now have a clear plan in place to develop individual achievement. A placing social worker reports that the service has developed one young person's educational attainment so well that there are plans to reintegrate him into mainstream education.

Young people enjoy good health. There is a focus on living a healthy lifestyle. Both young people and staff are encouraged and supported to make healthy options with food, exercise and personal care. Young people say that since coming to the home they have given up smoking, drinking energy drinks and are making more sensible choices at mealtimes. Young people demonstrate a good understanding of their individual health needs. One young person has made notable improvement with coming to terms with and managing a specific health need. A health professional confirms this and states 'because this young person is so settled and seems happy and relaxed in the home his anxiety/behaviour medication can be decreased'.

Young people develop self-esteem and confidence in their abilities through the varied and exciting activity programme. Young people are provided with lots of different experiences and particularly enjoy martial arts, swimming, dog walking, trampolining, caring for animals and horse riding. Young people are looking forward to the forthcoming residential holiday and are excited about going scuba diving. One parent said that her child had never engaged with physical activity before and he is now enjoying playing football and going to the gym regularly.

Young people say they have improved their behaviour since living in the home. There has been a notable decrease in incidents of absconding and going missing and also behaviours which may need physical intervention to keep young people safe. Young people say they have learnt how to control their anger better. One young person says that staff taught him another way of responding and he now removes himself from a situation so that he calms down. Young people also say that talking to staff about their feelings has helped them to manage their anger more effectively. One parent says that since being in the provision her child is now calm and his feelings of anxiety and distress have decreased.

Quality of care

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

The quality of care provided is having a positive impact on young people's development and progress. Parents, placing social workers and external professionals confirm this. Referral and assessment procedures ensure that each young person's placement is individually tailored to meet their needs and circumstances. Placements may be weekly, termly or full time and young people can access additional short breaks if this is identified as a need.

Each young person is cared for in line with a clearly defined individual plan setting out attainable aims for their placement. These documents are of good quality and demonstrate a strong understanding of young people's individual preferences, needs and the support they want to receive. Young people are aware of what information is kept about them through supporting staff to complete weekly summary reports of their achievements and progress. Detailed monthly reviews are compiled and sent to placing authorities to ensure all parties are kept up to date with young people's development.

There is effective collaboration and partnership working with other agencies including; placing authorities, health and education services and those with safeguarding responsibilities. Key information about young people is openly shared. Consequently, there is a consistent and unified approach to supporting young people in all outcome areas. Managers are strong advocates for young people. They effectively and professionally challenge any barriers to young people's development. This includes ensuring young people's family contact is positive and that young people are provided with effective support from placing authorities.

The organisation has high aspirations for young people's education. Staff are inventive in establishing ways to engage young people with both attending and progressing educationally. Examples of this include; going to forest school, young people devising their own timetable and the use of individualised projects that reflect young people's skills.

The quality of relationships between carers and young people are good. Young people describe this as being the best thing about living in the home. Staff are concerned about and interested in young people and there is a focus on spending time together in order to promote stability. One member of staff works directly with each young person on every shift. Young people take responsibility for choosing a key worker and this approach has ensured they meet regularly with a carer that they feel comfortable and confident with. Young people can identify key adults whom they would go to if they were worried or unhappy in the home. Additionally they are also provided with a designated telephone and contact numbers for external agencies. One young person says he knows he feels safe in the home because there are adults that he can talk to and who listen to him.

Young people's health and dietary needs are fully met. They are provided with appropriate medical care when they are poorly or injured. Well-trained staff enable the safe administration of medication, first aid treatment and management of specialist conditions. Young people's emotional and psychological health is closely monitored and the therapeutic team provide regular guidance and support.

Young people are able to negotiate about life in the home through regular group meetings with the house supervisor. A recent development has involved the young people working together each week to decide the house menu. Each young person negotiates with the others in order to choose the meal for everyone on two days per week. Young people are developing team building and compromising skills.

Additionally, young people's views are sought on activities, pets in the home and the use of facilities and equipment.

Young people are supported to develop their self-identity by choosing their own clothing, activities and personalising their bedroom. Carers guide and advise sensible options however, young people are able to reflect their culture, preferences, and individual tastes. Mealtimes are an enjoyable experience in the home where carers and young people eat communally. Young people develop self-help skills by setting and clearing away and social skills such as manners, interest in others and turn taking.

The house is well maintained and decorated; however, some aspects in communal areas detract from the homely feel the service is intending to portray. For instance, although young people enjoy spending time in the lounge to play computer games, socialise and watch the television, there is a lack of colour, photographs and 'lived in' feel within the room. Large bolts are used on some cupboard doors which does not complement a domestic family style setting.

Parents and placing social workers say that they cannot praise the home and staff team enough. Comments include: 'it is a very child focused service where their needs and development are viewed holistically', 'staff take the time to talk to my son and listen to what he wants and needs; therefore, they know him well and have managed to engage him better than any other provision'.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Safeguarding continues to have a high priority within the home. Staff are aware of their responsibilities and effectively implement policies, procedures and risk assessments in practice. Young people are protected by the organisation's robust recruitment systems and monitoring of visitors to the home. The Registered Manager has recently completed a safer recruitment course and subsequently reviewed the existing employment systems to enhance them further. Staff are carefully selected and do not start work until all vetting checks are fully completed. All staff have completed training in safeguarding and are provided with regular refreshers which keep them up to date with current procedures. Staff are alert to young people's vulnerabilities and closely monitor their welfare. They appropriately share any arising concerns with one of the experienced and suitably trained senior managers.

Young people say they feel safe in the home and that the clear boundaries and guidance they receive has helped them to significantly decrease and on some occasions, stop previous risk taking behaviours. Young people say they no longer put themselves at risk by smoking or going missing. Parents and placing social workers confirm this and are pleased with the progress young people are making. All staff take responsibility for guiding young people to make safe choices and manage risk effectively. Discussions are open and supportive while being appropriately challenging to enable young people to reflect on their behaviour in order to learn from experiences.

The home successfully implements a positive behaviour management policy. There is effective use of de-escalation, boundaries and expectations, role modelling, rewards and personalised therapeutic intervention. Individual behaviour support strategies are fully understood by everyone. Young people feel secure because approaches are consistently applied. Sanctions are used and young people say that these are fair and reflect the behaviour. Young people find the reward system motivating and say that it has helped them to develop positive behaviour. Young people are respectful of each other's differences and consequently enjoy good relationships together. Bullying and discrimination are not identified as problems within the home. Staff are well-trained in an approved behaviour intervention method. Physical interventions are used only when absolutely necessary to ensure safety. Systems are in place to provide young people with a de-brief following a physical intervention. However, some records detail a repeat of the actual incident rather than young people's views of the incident. Additionally, de-briefs tend to be carried out by the member of staff involved in the restraint, limiting the opportunity for an independent discussion and open reflection by the young people.

Risk assessments, policies and procedures are in place to support the maintenance of a safe environment. Where issues are identified these are attended to promptly. The home and grounds are physically safe and appropriately secure. Robust safety and servicing checks are undertaken and regular fire drills take place to ensure staff and young people can practice the evacuation drill.

Leadership and management

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

The senior managers have high expectations of themselves, the staff team and the young people. Staff work with enthusiasm and commitment and speak positively of the support they receive from managers and each other. Staff morale is high and this positively benefits young people. A placing social worker stated she would highly commend the staff team, particularly the house managers. She said that the service is self-reflective and questions practice at all times in order to make improvements for the young people placed there.

Since the last inspection a new house supervisor has been appointed to support the Registered Manager in the direct running of the home. The house supervisor is a skilled practitioner with good experience of working with young people. Since being in post she has supported the manager in building and developing the staff team and providing a positive example in terms of practice with the young people. Team meetings, supervision, appraisal, and handovers focus on direct work with young people and staff receive effective coaching, support and direction. Each individual has a good understanding of their role and responsibilities. There are clear lines of accountability and consequently the home effectively operates at all times within the detailed statement of purpose and organisational policies.

This service has a proven track record of achieving good outcomes for young people

and has a clear strategy for driving forward improvement and developing the service to ensure its sustainability. Since the last full inspection, there has been a renewed focus on enhancing the child-centred provision. A number of practices have been reviewed, resulting in less physical restrictions within the home and no routine searches of young people's belongings. Young people have a greater say in the running of the home including regular group meetings, choosing their key workers and giving their views on sanctions.

Staffing levels are high. Young people are provided with one-to-on support at all times and therefore benefit from individualised care and effective interaction. There has been a recent review of the staff composition; there is an improved gender balance in order to meet young people's preferred needs.

Evaluation of the home is achieved through observation of practice by managers, review of documentation and seeking the views of young people and significant others. Comprehensive regulation 34 audits include a full review of each individual young person's presentation and their development and progress over the previous month. This information is analysed by managers and ensures that support plans and aims for the placement are continually reviewed and updated based on current evidence. At the time of inspection the review of regular monitoring had not been sent to HMCI as consistent with regulations.

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.