

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	23/05/2012
Inspector	Stephen Halliley
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	28/02/2012
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This privately operated home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to four young people who may display emotional or behavioural difficulties.

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 **adequate**.

Young people accommodated in this home have a range of complex needs and can display challenging behaviour. They are supported to develop emotional stability, build and maintain relationships and reduce their anti-social behaviours by a committed and caring staff team. This increases their feelings of self worth and emotional resilience and this in turn helps them make clear improvements in many areas of their lives during their time in the home. The home works very closely with other agencies to promote these features and to support the importance of health and education.

Young people are kept safe and say that they feel safe in the home. Staff have a thorough knowledge and understanding of safeguarding procedures and when these may need to be implemented. The home has a strong commitment to ensuring young people are protected from potential harm and abuse and recruitment procedures are robust in supporting this.

The Registered Manager is very aware of the strengths and weaknesses within the home and has a robust development plan in place to address these. The inspection identified areas for improvement around the statement of purpose, children's guide, thoroughness of recording and the legibility of some records. A shortfall was found with regard to the maintenance of the exterior of the home and the application of some of the home's policies and procedures. There was also a failure to meet requirements in terms of notifications being made and ensuring that all monitoring is in line with regulations.

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
5 (2001)	keep under review and, where appropriate, revise the statement of purpose with particular reference to staff supervision, reference to current regulations and national minimum standards and the number of young people to be accommodated in the home (Regulation 5 (a))	29/06/2012
17B (2001)	ensure that following the use of any measure of discipline a written record is made in a volume kept for the purpose which includes a description of the measure used; the date and time of the measure used; the effectiveness of any consequences of the measure used (Regulation 17B (3)(c)(d)(f))	29/06/2012
30 (2001)	ensure that any events listed in column 1 of the table of Schedule 5 are notified without delay to Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) (Regulation 30(1))	29/06/2012
34 (2001)	ensure that the monitoring system provides for consultation with children accommodated in the home, their parents and placing authorities. (Regulation 34 (3))	29/06/2012

Recommendations

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

- ensure that the home provides a comfortable and homely environment and is well maintained and decorated. This relates to the exterior of the building (NMS 10.3)
- ensure that the children's guide includes a summary of what the home sets out to do for children, how they can find out their rights, how a child can contact their independent reviewing officer, the Children's Rights Director and Ofsted; also, how to secure access to an independent advocate (NMS 13.5)
- ensure that the manager regularly monitors, in line with regulations, all records kept by the home to ensure compliance with the home's policies, to identify any concerns about specific incidents and to identify patterns and trends. Immediate action is taken to address any issues raised by this monitoring (NMS 21.2)
- ensure that all the staff's work is consistent with the regulations and national minimum standards, the home's policies and procedures. This relates to dating entries in restrictive physical intervention records and completing all necessary log entries in detail (NMS 21.3)

- ensure that all entries in records are legible, clearly expressed, non-stigmatising and distinguish as far as possible between fact, opinion and third party information. (NMS 22.4)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people make significant progress in many aspects of their lives since coming to live in this home. Improvements are seen in educational attendance and achievement, social skills, preparation for independence and the reduction of anti-social behaviour. The older young people have taken, or are currently taking, examinations at levels which are appropriate to their individual needs and abilities. These achievements represent considerable progress from their starting points.

Young people make good progress in developing emotional resilience and self-confidence. This is primarily through having their needs thoroughly and accurately assessed, the staff treating them with respect and having their individuality recognised and celebrated. This is enhanced by staff listening to them, responding appropriately to requests for support and clear behaviour management strategies. These are designed to empower young people to take responsibility for their actions.

Young people's physical health is generally good. They are encouraged to lead active lifestyles through the provision of a varied and interesting activity programme. This has recently been supplemented by a yoga group, so those who are self-conscious or not the most able athletes can readily participate in a healthy activity. Young people are encouraged to eat healthily. They have good input into menus, which are varied to respect the diverse cultural backgrounds and provide a clear balance between the food groups. Young people are given advice around smoking, personal hygiene, substance misuse and keeping safe. There has been a decrease in these behaviours, showing that young people take notice of this information.

Most young people attend full-time education and attendance rates are high. Each young person has made great progress since their placement in the home in terms of either improved attendance, examinations to be taken or the achievement of accredited awards.

Young people are able to enjoy appropriate contact with those important to them and the home is proactive in encouraging and supporting this. Family contact is very individualised and is guided by a number of factors. These include the relationships within the family, the current family dynamics and plans made in agreement with the young people and their social workers. All the young people are comfortable with talking to staff about the relationships within their families. They are consulted and make a positive contribution to the home through group meetings, daily feedback, menu and activity planning and involvement in the decoration of their rooms and communal areas.

A culture of mutual respect is encouraged in the home. As a result young people

learn and develop social skills and understanding, at a pace and level appropriate to their individual ability.

Young people are supported to be positively involved in the wider community, with staff that are aware of the particular vulnerabilities of each young person. They access activities at local sports centres and youth clubs and involvement in part time work, such as in a local pet shop.

Young people develop independence skills at an age appropriate level. There is a comprehensive living skills plan in place for those young people approaching the transition to adult services or semi-independent living. Work is based around individual skills, abilities and areas identified as needing improvement. This work clearly supports young people in being ready for adult life. They move on with greater self-confidence, self awareness and improved opportunities than when they arrived.

Quality of care

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

In the main, young people enjoy positive relationships with staff and managers who are warm, supportive and motivated towards them. The home has a clear child centred focus and philosophy and staff work hard to build and maintain strong relationships. This has helped staff to manage challenging behaviours consistently. There is a positive consequences system to recognise achievements and successes. It is encouraging to see that, at times, the number of positive consequences is similar to the negative suggesting young people are managing their behaviours in a more balanced manner.

Staff are fully aware of young people's past and their future plans and this enables them to provide individual tailored responses to care. Staff work consistently to these plans and ensure that individual needs relating to culture, identity and religion are met.

Young people are involved in the development of clear placement plans and their input is valued as part of the care planning and reviewing process. They are encouraged to attend all meetings which will have an impact on their care and future. If they feel unable to do so, key workers will advocate on their behalf and ensure that they receive timely and appropriate feedback on any decisions made.

Staff listen to young people and are involved with them through many aspects of daily living. Young people know how to complain and are confident to do so. They receive responses to their complaints and are clear that these will be acted upon. Although staff give young people written information which tells them how to complain, this does not include contact information for their independent reviewing officer and the Children's Rights Director. This may prevent young people from being able to contact external sources of advice, should they wish to do so.

The home provides a welcoming communal area that is well decorated and maintained throughout. Young people can decorate their bedrooms to individual taste and these areas are well looked after. However the exterior of the building is not decorated to such a high standard and this does not give the appearance of a home that is well maintained.

Clear and detailed health plans provide a detailed oversight of each young person's individual health needs. Staff provide prompt, well-coordinated responses to all individual health needs. Young people are offered good access and support from specialist services such as child and adolescent mental health services and a dynamic psychotherapist. This ensures they are able to receive the support from the right professionals to appropriately meet their individual needs.

Education is clearly prioritised within the home. All young people have had periods of disruption to their education prior to coming to this home, but all now attend regularly and are achieving well. College courses are also being accessed and applications have been made for the appropriate courses for the next academic year. This ensures young people continue with their education as part of their on going care plans.

There is a good, diverse staff team in terms of age, gender and experience. This provides young people with a variety of role models and support. Clear, good quality planning with regard to equality and diversity enables staff to identify needs relating to young people's cultural backgrounds.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people state that they feel safe in the home and that staff work in a manner designed to keep them safe. Bullying is not an issue. There are clear, effective bullying, safeguarding and behaviour management policies in place to support staff in keeping young people safe. Staff have a good understanding of these, are able to recognise signs and symptoms of potential abuse and know how to raise concerns. The Registered Manager has a good understanding of actions to take and when it may be necessary to notify external organisations such as Ofsted and the local safeguarding teams. She is developing a clear system to ensure that senior staff are able to do this appropriately in her absence. This ensures a coordinated response to address safeguarding issues and safeguards young people. However, notifications of significant events are not always being made promptly, as required by regulation.

Anti-social behaviour is clearly and consistently challenged, helping to promote a developing awareness of socially acceptable behaviour. Sanctions given for inappropriate behaviour are recorded and are generally relevant to the behaviour being exhibited. Not all sanction recording meets regulation in terms of describing the sanction used, the time and date of the sanction and the effectiveness and consequences of any sanction used. Records also demonstrate a limited range of sanctions which have minimal impact on addressing negative behaviours.

There are clear policies and protocols to follow if substance misuse is suspected and if young people go missing. Incidents of young people being reported as missing have reduced dramatically since one young person has moved on. Young people are responded to positively on their return from periods of absence and all recording is very thorough. The reasons for young people's behaviours are explored with them. The home also works proactively with outside agencies to strengthen safeguarding procedures, showing their determination to keep young people safe. While this does not always prevent some young people from repeating this behaviour, it does inform care practice and strengthens the home's safeguarding procedures.

Risk assessments are written and reviewed with the intention of minimising risk to young people without unduly impacting on their access to opportunities. Fire risk assessments and fire safety procedures are effectively and appropriately monitored. A range of further health and safety checks provides further protection from accidents within the home.

Levels of restraint are low since the last Ofsted inspection, but remain necessary in light of some young people's behaviours to prevent damage or injury. All staff receive training in behaviour management before starting direct work with young people. As a result, they are able to restrain young people safely. Young people are given the opportunity to discuss their behaviour and the restraint following each incident and this helps them to understand why the restraint was necessary. Restraint records are comprehensive and accurate. However, staff do not sign and date entries, as required by the home's own policy and procedures.

Leadership and management

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

There were a number of requirements and recommendations made at the last Ofsted inspection. The home has addressed all the requirements and all but one of the recommendations. While some progress has been made in modifying the children's guide, this requires further updating, as outlined above.

The Registered Manager has taken steps to improve the service through a clear and comprehensive development plan. The plan identifies areas for improvement and reflects the home's commitment to continual improvement. Another Registered Manager within the organisation visits, monitors and comments on the standard of care, in line with regulation 33. The manager uses the reports of these visits, together with outcomes of her own monitoring, to inform practice and make improvements.

The Registered Manager has been in post for some time and has clear plans for the development of the home. She is approachable, supportive of her staff and driven to provide a high quality service to young people. She is open and honest with her staff and young people alike and involves them in identifying ways to improve the service provision.

The manager monitors the quality of care practices in the home and regularly reviews care plans, risk assessments and daily records. These reviews are clearly recorded, but monitoring is not sufficiently robust. For example, developing trends are not being identified, such as staff failing to date entries or fully complete all required records. The system in place does not include consultation with young people, their parents and placing authorities when reviewing the quality of care provided.

Staff receive regular supervision, both formal and informal. This support for staff is enhanced by regular, productive team meetings which focus on the young people and what improvements can be made to enhance their outcomes.

Staffing levels are sufficient to meet the needs of the young people in the home. There is the flexibility to increase these levels at times of high anxiety or distress for young people. The staff team carry out regular reviews and updates of young people's files however some entries seen in young people's files were illegible. This would not help a young person understand their files if they were to look at them now or in the future.

There is a clear statement of purpose which informs young people, their families and placing authorities about the services provided by the home. However this needs to be reviewed and updated in relation to the number of young people to be accommodated and in referring to current national minimum standards.

All staff employed in the home hold qualifications commensurate with their role, responsibilities and experience. The internal training programme trains staff in a wide range of matters including behaviour management, first aid, safeguarding, fire safety, food hygiene and equality and diversity. This training enables staff to fully meet the needs of young people.

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.