

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Anne Bannister
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Date of last inspection	07/12/2011
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This privately-owned children's home is registered to accommodate and care for four young people of either gender. Young people accommodated at the home experience emotional and behavioural difficulties. The home accepts emergency placements and can offer care to young people on a short-, medium- or long- term basis.

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**.

This is the first inspection of this newly registered children's home. The home was registered in December 2011 but had no residents until April 2012. Young people have positive views about the care they receive and indicate that they have made progress since admission to the home. They enjoy positive, caring relationships with staff and make comments such as 'staff here really care about you, it's the first place I have been where staff genuinely want to help you do well. It's quite hard to accept that they really do care.' Young people indicate that they feel safe living in the home. Staff are consistent in way they respond to young people's behaviours and young people report that they are 'not losing it as often' and are managing their feelings in a more appropriate way. Young people are safeguarded by good quality care which promotes their safety and well-being.

Individual care planning is in the early stages of development and some weaknesses have been identified which have resulted in recommendations being made. Senior managers are aware of the strengths and weaknesses in the current format of care planning and have a development plan in place to review and address this and other issues. Two breaches in regulation have been identified but are not judged to have impacted negatively on the safety and welfare of young people.

Feedback from social workers and parents is positive. Their communication with the home ensures that they are kept well informed of both of the progress and any issues for young people. The placing authority indicated that they are very impressed with the care provides and the significant progress young people have made since admission.

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
32 (2001)	take adequate precautions against the risk of fire, including the provision of suitable equipment. Specifically monthly and weekly checks of equipment must be recorded (Regulation 32.1a)	16/07/2012
26 (2001)	ensure that prior to taking up employment, full and satisfactory information is available for all staff in respect of each of the matters specified in Schedule 2. (Regulation 26 (3))	16/07/2012

Recommendations

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

- ensure staff work with a child's educational provider to maximise each child's achievement and to minimise any under achievement. Specifically ensure that staff record clearly the activities they are undertaking to support each young person's education (NMS 8.4)
- ensure that children's health is promoted in accordance with their placement plan and that staff are clear about what responsibilities and decisions are delegated to them. Specifically this relates to the need to clearly include in young people's residential action plans how young people are being encouraged to attend routine medical and dental checks (NMS 6.5)
- ensure sanctions used for behaviours are clear, reasonable and fair and are understood by staff and children. Specifically this relates to the need to evidence that sanctions used are being effective in promoting positive changes in young people's behaviours (NMS 3.8)
- ensure there is an emergency escape plan that all staff and children are familiar with and have practised so they know what to do in an emergency. Specifically record the names of the staff and young people participating in drills to ensure that every one has the opportunity to be involved in fire drills. (NMS 10.9)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people are still in the process of settling into the home and establishing close relationships with all staff. They are positive about the care they receive and indicate there is always someone they can speak to if they have any concerns. Young people believe that staff want to help them achieve in all aspects of their lives.

Young people confirm that staff are helping them to make progress with their educational achievements and to develop healthy lifestyles and positive ways of managing their anger and frustrations. Placing authorities are positive about the progress young people are making in the relatively short time they have been at the home. Each young person's individuality is acknowledged and respected by the staff team who work hard to develop young people's self-esteem and sense of well-being.

Young people's identified physical and emotional health needs are being addressed. When young people need specialist health care or support, staff act as advocates to ensure they receive the services they require. Healthy lifestyles are promoted and young people are aware of the impact of healthy eating and exercise in promoting a sense of well-being. Young people are encouraged to help plan and prepare meals alongside staff, encouraging the development of skills which will promote their independence.

Staff work hard to motivate and engage all young people in formal programmes of education. All young people are engaged in individually planned education programmes. This is a significant development for some young people who have previously failed to engage in education for a lengthy period of time. One young person shared that since coming to the home they have 'gone back to school, got a more regular sleep pattern, and begun to learn to manage anger and panics in a better way.' The nurturing environment promotes young people's self-esteem, and achievements and attainments are celebrated in a way that is helping them to develop a more positive self-image.

Young people are helped to understand the events which have resulted in their placement in the home. Where appropriate, contact arrangements are fully supported. Young people are supported to sustain positive relationships with people who are important in their lives. This increases their sense of belonging and identity.

Quality of care

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

Young people have caring, nurturing relationships with staff and interact positively with one another. Staff are committed to providing young people with consistent, appropriate boundaries which encourage the development of young people's social skills and discourage anti-social behaviours.

Young people are cared for in line with the home's residential action plans. The plans complement statutory placement plans and are in the early stages of development. Currently they do not always adequately reflect the good level of support young

people are receiving to promote their health and educational attainment.

Young people have opportunities to contribute their views on the way the home should be run through individual key worker sessions and house meetings. Their views are taken into account and where they cannot be acted upon, clear feedback is given. Young people know how to make a complaint if they are unhappy about any aspect of their care. However, they feel staff are able to resolve issues informally, which encourages young people's involvement and participation in decision-making.

Young people are supported to attend their reviews and staff try to ensure that they feel consulted about matters relating to the planning of the care they will receive. Positive communication with parents, social workers and other professionals ensures that young people are receiving the support they require to sustain and promote positive outcomes in all aspects of their lives.

Young people enjoy living in a homely environment that meets their needs. The home is furnished and decorated to a good standard. A number of communal areas allow young people space to pursue individual interests. Young people's bedrooms are personalised to reflect their interests and individual tastes.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people report that the home is a safe place in which to live. Staff practice promotes a safe, caring environment where the promotion of young people's welfare is key in all decision-making.

Young people are supported by staff to develop socially acceptable behaviours. Detailed behaviour management plans advise staff how young people's sometimes challenging and risk-taking behaviours should be responded to. A strong emphasis is placed on the use of distraction and de-escalation to avert inappropriate behaviours. All staff are trained in the home's preferred method of behaviour management and would only ever use physical intervention as the last resort when young people are placing themselves and others at risk. There have been no incidents when the use of physical intervention has been required since the home opened.

Staff are aware of young people's specific vulnerabilities and the challenges they may present. They use staff meetings and handover periods to review challenging and risk-taking behaviours and update residential actions plans. The use of sanctions is minimal, with staff preferring to encourage young people to reflect upon the impact of their behaviours on others. When a sanction is given as a consequence of a negative incident staff advise they review its effectiveness in promoting positive behaviours. However, there is no recorded evidence to confirm this.

There are adequate systems in place to keep young people and staff safe from the risk of fire and other potential hazards. Both young people and staff are involved in fire drills and there is an up-to-date fire risk assessment in place. However, the

current records of fire drills do not detail the staff and young people who are present. It is therefore, not possible to confirm whether all staff and young people have had opportunities to practice the evacuation of the building in an emergency. Equipment within the home is serviced and checked at appropriate intervals. However, weekly and monthly checks of fire equipment are not always evidenced, which has some potential for placing staff and young people at risk.

Whilst the majority of recruitment files indicate that young people's welfare is protected by robust staff recruitment processes, two files did not fully reflect this good practice. The Registered Manager had worked alongside these two staff in his previous place of employment. He knows them well and is aware of their commitment to providing high quality care to young people. Their files contained a new CRB check and evidenced that verbal references had been obtained. However, the two staff had taken up post prior to written references being received. This shortfall is not judged to have had a negatively impacted on young people or placed them at any immediate risk but showed some naivety on behalf of the Registered Manager in fulfilling the full responsibilities of his role.

Leadership and management

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

Young people are receiving care from an experienced, caring staff team who are lead by an enthusiastic, child-centred manager. It is his first senior management post and he is settling well into the role. He is well supported by senior managers within the company. The manager aims to continue to support the improvement of the service and ensures staff have access to a training programme that equips them with the skills they require to address young people's identified needs. The staff team work well together and understand the responsibilities and expectations of their roles. The whole team is committed to ensuring the best outcomes for young people in all aspects of their lives.

As numbers of young people increase, additional staff are being employed. Whilst not all staff on appointment hold social care qualifications they have extensive experience in working with vulnerable young people. As a group, staff either hold, are registered to undertake or are awaiting registration to obtain a social care qualification. The wide range of backgrounds and experience of the staff team enable them to address the complex needs young people may present. They feel well supported by their manager both on an informal daily basis and through formal supervision. Staff feel positive about working at the home and feel they can talk to the manager about any concerns they may have. Regular staff meetings ensure consistency in addressing young people's identified needs. A senior social work practitioner, with adolescent mental health experience, attends staff meetings on a monthly basis providing support and guidance to staff supporting them to manage the emotional challenges young people experience.

There are adequate systems in place to monitor the performance of the home. Monthly audits of the service are undertaken by the manager and by an independent

person appointed by the company to monitor the quality of care. The monitoring in place takes account of the views young people, placing authorities and families. A development plan drawn up by senior managers within the company identifies that the organisation's quality monitoring of documentation needs to be strengthened. An action plan was presented by the Responsible Individual which is addressing these issues and is scheduled to be formally discussed with the manager at his next professional supervision. The plan acknowledges the home's strengths and areas for further development and was drawn up following a review of the service provided since young people began to be admitted. These actions demonstrate the company's commitment to providing high quality childcare which meets both legislative requirements and the complex needs of vulnerable 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.