

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	14/08/2012
Inspector	Julian Mason
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home can accommodate up to eight young people with emotional and/or behaviour difficulties. The home is run by the local authority.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: a service of exceptional quality that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

Good: a service of high quality 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**.

Young people make good progress in relation to their starting points across all aspects of their social, physical and emotional development. This is because young people receive effective high quality support from a team of staff who are also well supported in their work. Staff ensure care practices and planning are tailored to meet the individual needs of each young person. Young people feel very safe in the home and with the staff who work with them. Behavioural boundaries are made clear so young people know what is expected of them. Staff help young people behave well by being fair and reasonable, focusing on praise and rewarding good or improving behaviour. Young people are regularly consulted about their care and support needs, which helps managers and staff to organise the home's routines to fit around their individual circumstances.

The home has been without a Registered Manager for a considerable period but a new manager has been appointed who has applied to register with Ofsted. Staff are effectively supported in their day-to-day work because managers are directly involved in many of the daily routines that occur in the home. Young people's progress is monitored because the manager evaluates the services being provided and outcomes being achieved. However, some of the monthly monitoring reports are not being sent to Ofsted as required and stakeholder feedback is not being fully assessed, or included, as part of the manager's formal quality assurance processes.

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
33 (2001)	ensure monthly monitoring reports completed under this regulation are copied to Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (Regulation 33(5)(a))	30/09/2012
34 (2001)	ensure quality of care reviews under this regulation provide for consultation with parents and placing social workers. (Regulation 34(3))	30/09/2012

Recommendations

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

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people benefit from care and support that encourages progress and growing confidence in their skills. Staff know each young person well, they are always accessible and able to discuss matters that are important to them, which can relate to their emotional well-being and self-esteem. Young people experience helpful and enabling relationships with key designated staff who are responsible for ensuring individual plans of care and personal goals are achieved. Young people's friendships and family attachments are effectively supported by well-organised and planned contact arrangements.

Young people are consistently provided with a healthy environment where they are able to access the services and support needed to meet their physical, emotional and psychological needs. Access to a range of services is facilitated and supported because of the very effective links the home has with many agencies and professionals. Young people benefit from staff working in partnership with others to ensure the right services are accessed and their needs are being met.

Young people's education and learning arrangements take into account their potential attainment and progress from their starting points on arrival at the home. There is a mix of timetables and education providers and full or part-time attendance. Staff work with each young person and their school or education provider to promote good attendance and achievement. Where young people miss opportunities to take up their preferred subject choices, staff help to explore and find

alternative arrangements so young people have a chance of pursuing their future goals. Some young people have successfully completed their last year of school and are waiting for their GCSE results before moving on to college and vocational training.

Staff provide practical support and encouragement to help young people learn and develop the necessary life skills needed as they get older. For example, young people are helped to develop budgeting, cooking and domestic skills. Young people have free time away from the home to help them maintain their own friendships and learn to be socially responsible in their communities. Staff coach and mentor young people in the use of public transport and how to navigate and plan journeys on their own. Some young people have paid or voluntary jobs which is strongly encouraged and supported by the staff team.

Quality of care

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

Young people experience positive and constructive relationships with managers and the staff team. Boundaries and behavioural expectations are made clear and where young people's behaviour falls short of what is acceptable this is communicated in a way that is understood. Staff want young people to behave well and provide positive support and encouragement to help achieve this. Although young people's behaviour towards each other can be difficult and challenging at times, the home's atmosphere is generally calm, relaxed and friendly. Day-to-day relationships are conducted with good humour and respect for everyone.

Young people's views, wishes and feelings are actively and regularly sought and shared with staff to ensure they are able to influence the running of the home. Young people feel listened to and know that they can contribute their views to the running of the home. Each young person has an allocated key worker who is part of a care team tasked to ensure young people regularly discuss their needs and how they are being met, in private. Meetings are also held regularly where young people meet as a group and talk to staff about the running of the home. Managers and staff listen to what young people have to say and this helps them shape the home's routines to best suit the resident group at the time. Staff are not able to act on all suggestions made, but they do explain the reasons why. For instance, when suggestions present a potential conflict with health and safety responsibilities or safeguarding arrangements.

Young people are fully aware how to make a complaint and have full confidence in the manager resolving any issues they have. In addition, they are very aware of how to access the local authority's children rights service and outside agencies, if needed. Visiting professionals highlight one of the home's strengths as promoting and advocating for young people's rights and ensuring their voice is heard in relation to their care.

Young people's needs are well known by the staff team as they have access to

comprehensive information about them. Staff quickly establish a rapport with young people and learn about their experiences and backgrounds. Young people are enabled and supported to be involved in the planning and provision of their care. Participation in formal and informal meetings is high, resulting in young people actively sharing their aspirations and aims for the future. Young people have very diverse backgrounds and identities and staff work to ensure cultural, religious or communication needs are identified and met. For instance, young people are offered help to explore their family heritage, to buy food and personal needs items and where necessary they are provided with assistance regarding communication if English is not their first language.

Young people participate in a range of activities that include their own choices and preferences, as well as joining in with group events and outings that have been suggested by staff. The home is located close to many local recreational and leisure facilities which young people are encouraged and supported to use. The detached, purpose built property provides enough space for young people and staff to comfortably share with each other or alternatively to be away from the main group. The home is organised to promote everyone's safety, thought and consideration is given to the mix of young people and how communal areas and bedrooms are arranged and supervised.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people feel safe and comfortable in the home and with the staff who look after them. Staff fully understand their roles and responsibilities and are vigilant and focused on protecting young people from harm. Staff know what to do if they are concerned about the safety of a young person, as they know when and how to make a safeguarding referral if needed. Managers provide effective supervision of the team to ensure care practices are safe and young people are happy with the care and support they receive.

There have been no physical interventions since the last inspection and very few formal sanctions have been given. Staff focus on changing or modifying unwanted behaviour, by promoting positive behaviour and rewarding young people for getting it right. Each young person has a behavioural reward chart that highlights behaviours that they need to work on. Young people are incentivised by this approach and are able to make improvements which benefit them regarding their daily interactions and relationships.

Generally, young people do not go missing from the home and for most of the time staff know where young people are. On the few occasions where young people have been away from the home without permission, staff used individualised assessments to guide their responses to these events. Assessments are based on young people's age, vulnerability and circumstances; these take account of existing and established levels of independence and already agreed arrangements for free time. Staff want to ensure young people are safe in these circumstances and they do this successfully by

following well-established procedures.

The manager ensures that only suitably vetted staff work with young people, although no new members of staff have started work in the home since the last inspection. The home's environment is physically safe and secure because regularly reviewed risks assessments are used to inform and guide staff about the actions necessary to keep everyone safe. Fire precautions and prevention equipment are checked and assessed regularly to ensure fire hazards and risks can be dealt with if needed.

Leadership and management

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

The home has been without a Registered Manager for a considerable period. However, a new manager has been appointed and is in the process of applying to the regulator to be assessed for their fitness to manage a registered children's service.

The home is effectively and efficiently managed and staff feel very well supported in their work with young people. Staff are organised and supported in a way that ensures the needs of young people are consistently met. For instance, levels of staffing are adjusted according to the needs and circumstances of the resident group. Staff are very committed to the care of young people and these circumstances are created because of the strong and noticeable leadership from managers. The home has well-established systems in place to monitor the operation of the service. These systems include regular monthly visits from a representative of the organisation through to the manager's own monitoring routines. Information is clearly available to inform the service about how well young people's needs are being met.

Although monthly visits are carried out, some reports are not being sent to Ofsted as required. Also, the manager has regular contact with a range of stakeholders who are involved in the service, but information from these groups is not assessed as part of the formal evaluation of the service. However, the manager is still able to draw together a range of information that is included in the home's development plan, which highlights areas for further development and improvement.

Staff are able to discuss their work with managers when needed and in more formal supervision meetings. They attend training to ensure their core skills; knowledge and awareness are kept up to date. Most staff hold an appropriate level 3 qualification or are currently working towards completing this. Staff and managers ensure records are up to date, stored securely and fully contribute to an understanding of a young person's life at the home. Significant events that occur and relate to young people's safety are shared with the appropriate agencies, which detail the events and actions taken to safeguard and protect.

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.