

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	26/09/2012
Inspector	Dorrit Andrews
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Provision subtype	Children's home

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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home is privately owned. It is registered to look after a maximum of six young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties. There are education facilities within the grounds of the home.

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 **adequate**.

Young people receive personalised care which takes account of their individual needs and circumstances. They benefit from positive relationships with the core staff team who are supporting them to develop and progress.

Young people report they generally feel safe while at the home and are able to identify staff to whom they can take any concerns. Key worker sessions provide good opportunities to discuss issues and seek young people's views relating to the day-to-day life at the home.

Communication and working relationships are reported to be 'good' between the staff and social work teams. The home is also seen as providing good contact support and having the ability to build relationships with young people enabling them to progress.

The manager understands the strengths and areas of further development of the home. Areas identified for improvement include recording, monitoring, supervision of staff, discussions with social workers about young people's occasional restricted access to areas of the home, reviewing the home's Statement of Purpose and the compiling of a development plan.

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
17 (2001)	ensure written records of any measure of control, restraint or discipline includes all details required by the regulations (Regulation 17(3) and Regulation 17 (4))	31/10/2012
4 (2001)	ensure the home's Statement of Purpose is reviewed to include all relevant details with particular reference to the age range of children provided with accommodation, the qualifications of staff and a description of any electronic or mechanical means of surveillance of children which may be used in the children's home. (Regulation (4) (1))	09/11/2012

Recommendations

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

- ensure young people's comments and reasons for going missing from the home are detailed in missing from care records (NMS 5.10)
- ensure all staff's work is consistent with the home's policies and procedures, with particular reference to completing missing from care records, incident reports and records of sanctions (NMS 21.3)
- ensure the practice of occasionally restricting access to areas of the home to promote young people's welfare is only used when agreed with the responsible authority and, if appropriate, the parents (NMS 10.4)
- ensure the home's young person's guide includes details of how a young person can contact their Independent Reviewing Officer and the Children's Rights Director (NMS 13.5)
- ensure reports of visits carried out under regulation 33 are lodged in the home for the manager and staff to respond (NMS 21.8)
- ensure the registered person takes action to address any issues of concerns which are raised with them, with particular reference to regulation 33 reports (NMS 21.9)
- ensure the registered person has a written development plan, reviewed annually, for the future of the home (NMS 15.2)
- ensure all staff are provided with regular supervision by appropriately qualified and experienced staff. (NMS 19.4)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people are at differing stages in their placements and are making varying degrees of progress in developing their self-confidence and self-esteem. One social worker refers to the home as having done 'some remarkable work' with one young person in reducing aspects of their risk taking behaviour.

Young people are supported with their individual health needs and generally enjoy good health. However, some young people engage in activities associated with health risks such as smoking. Staff actively encourage visits to health professionals and the taking up of regular health checks. Appointments are made for young people as required and they are also encouraged to arrange these for themselves as their confidence develops.

The majority of young people are currently attending school or college. Some have started college for the first time and are still settling in and affirming their course choices. The home's onsite education facility is currently non-operational leaving one young person without formal education provision. An educational programme of activities is in place whilst the home awaits the anticipated arrival of supply cover teaching staff.

Young people are effectively supported to maintain and develop family contacts and friendships subject to any limitations or provisions set out in individual care plans. Staff transport young people and offer support to enable them to benefit from contact with family, friends and other people who are important to them.

Pathway plans are in place to support transition to independence and the daily life of the home provides opportunities for young people to develop practical life skills.

Quality of care

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

Young people benefit from good individualised care tailored to their needs. They are consistently and centrally involved in the planning and review of their care and staff work positively with other agencies and professionals to support young people. Relationships with core staff are constructive and positive and young people are helped to understand why it may not always be possible to meet their wishes. Placing social workers refer to young people's attachments to staff as being 'strong' and the ethos as being 'far less institutionalised' than previous placements experienced by some young people. Greater emphasis is being placed on actively seeking young people's views about the running of the home and activities. As a result individual holidays and trips were arranged during the summer which were of great benefit to those involved. Young people understand how to raise concerns or make a complaint. Practice within the home regarding room searches has positively

changed as a result of a complaint from a young person.

Young people's health needs are well met. Arrangements for dealing with medication are safe and effective. Each young person has an individual health care plan which includes details of medical appointments and health checks, including those refused. A therapist visits the home weekly and provides individual therapy sessions as well as conducting life story work and family sessions at a young person's home where appropriate. Young people are provided with opportunities and support to participate in a range of individual activities and interests outside of the home to support their overall well-being. These include horse riding, football, gym sessions and meeting up with friends who are also able to visit the home. Meals are prepared by staff incorporating ideas and suggestions from young people who are also encouraged to help prepare and cook meals. Young people report that there is a good cultural mix of food and they are encouraged to add items of their choice to the home's shopping list.

Staff promote the educational attendance of young people and work closely with a range of professionals to address barriers to attendance. Four young people are currently attending college or mainstream school. The home supports elements of the physical exercise and personal, social and health curriculum for one young person through agreed arrangements with the young person's school.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people report that they generally feel safe living at the home and can identify staff they feel they can talk to. Bullying is not reported to be a problem at the home. Comprehensive risk assessments identify known risks relating to individual young people. Strategies and handling plans are put in place to address these and also contribute to target setting with individuals through key worker sessions. Positive behaviour is promoted and young people consider house rules to be fair. There has been a recent rise in the use of physical intervention to prevent one young person from putting themselves and others at risk of harm; a placement meeting has been called in response to this rise. Records of sanctions and the use of physical intervention are maintained but records are not always clear regarding the effectiveness of the measure taken and whether young people have been asked to comment.

There have been a small number of incidents of young people going missing since the previous inspection; one young person's risk taking behaviour has lessened considerably during recent months. Agreed arrangements with the local police support effective action when young people go missing and ensure follow up visits upon their return. In-house procedures for recording incidents of young people going missing are clear and follow local protocols. However, the information recorded by staff does not reflect the home's procedures, particularly in relation to recording follow up action and seeking a young person's reasons for going missing. These shortfalls impact on the effectiveness of monitoring.

Staff working in the home are subject to appropriate recruitment and vetting procedures to ensure their suitability to work with young people. Visitors and contractors are routinely asked to sign in and show their identification. These practices reduce potential risks to the welfare of young people living at the home.

The home is adequately maintained and regular checks are undertaken of the physical environment. Clarity is needed regarding restricted access to the sitting room during school hours. Young people attending college and spending study periods at the home report there is sometimes confusion around this issue and that it can impact negatively on others. Risk assessments are carried out in relation to the premises and activities and an established system of review ensures these are kept up-to-date.

Leadership and management

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

The home is managed by a permanent Registered Manager. The provision operates to the aims and objectives set out its Statement and Purpose. However, there are some shortfalls in relation to the information required to be included. These relate to the age range of young people provided with accommodation, the qualifications of staff and a description of the use of electronic means of surveillance used in the home. Similarly, the young person's guide does not include details of the Children's Rights Officer and how a young person can contact their independent reviewing officer.

No requirements or recommendations were set at the previous inspection. Four complaints have been received by the home from young people. These have been addressed and resolved. The manager has made some administrative adjustments in recent months and has put a contingency plan in place. The services of a marketing manager have been employed to market the home and services provided.

The period since the previous inspection has been challenging in relation to staffing and the increase in the number of young people now in placement. Some staff have left and new staff have been appointed subject to satisfactory character checks. Adequate staffing levels are currently being maintained by a core staff team and the regular use of long-serving bank staff and agency staff. A system of appraisal is in place and staff have access to a range of training to support them in their work. The home's stated frequency of staff supervision sessions is monthly. However, it is clear from records maintained that this is not always achieved. Furthermore, the arrangements for supervision of bank staff are unclear.

The home's accommodation is adequately resourced and staff work hard to maintain a homely environment for young people. The manager is aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the service. However, there is no written development plan or budget forecasting in place. This limits the home's capacity to effectively and efficiently improve.

Systems are in place for monitoring the care of young people and the performance of the home. Regulation 33 visits are conducted monthly and reports placed on file. The quality of reports is improving and further action is being taken to ensure comments from parents/carers are obtained where possible. However, it is not current practice for the manager or responsible individual to respond to issues raised within the reports. It is therefore difficult to gauge how the reports are contributing to the home's improvement and outcomes for young people.

Comments from placing social workers give praise to the work of the home and the positive effect this is having on individuals and their progress. Particular praise is extended to the support and opportunities given to the development of independence skills to improve young people's life chances.

Records of individual planning, key worker sessions and target setting are good and contribute to an understanding of young people's backgrounds and progress. Shortfalls identified in relation to other records are outlined elsewhere in the report.

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.